United Nations A/CN.10/PV.284

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

284th meeting
Monday, 7 April 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Klerk . . . . (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The urgency of the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is clear to everyone reading the papers these days, given the attention paid to arms and armed conflict. Sometimes, in American newspapers, the word "arms" is writ large, as ARMs, meaning adjustable rate mortgages and referring to the meltdown of the housing market. But mostly the references are to weapons, both conventional and non-conventional; to the arms trade, the pernicious impact of new weaponry or the spread of weapons to new environments; or to the difficulties of building down nuclear arsenals or containing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, both to other States and to non-State actors.

In these testing times for disarmament and non-proliferation, the world needs leadership from the United Nations in general and its Secretary-General in particular — and I want to express my gratitude to him for being with us today and my admiration of him for showing just that leadership. From day one, he has called it a personal priority to revitalize multilateral efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation, and — to give one example — just a few days ago he spoke out forcefully for strengthening the anti-personnel mine regime.

On the first day of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, I want to make clear my commitment to making this Commission part of that revitalization. In doing so, it is a privilege to build on the work of my predecessors, Ambassador Oh Joon, former Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea and Chairman of the 2006 session, and Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, Permanent Representative of Uruguay, Chairman of the 2007 session. At the same time, it is a pleasure to have two able working group Chairs by my side: Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Carlos Perez of Brazil. I am confident that they will ably guide our negotiations. I am grateful for the work that Mr. Zinsou and Mr. Carlos Duarte, Mr. Perez's predecessor, have done in the past two years to bridge the gaps between Member States' positions.

Still, as the Disarmament Commission now starts its third and last year of the 2006-2008 cycle, the differences in positions remain significant and finding consensus will not be easy. But we have to. The United Nations disarmament machinery has produced great results in the past, both with regard to weapons of mass destruction and with regard to certain conventional weaponry, but at present it urgently needs a boost. Moreover, for the Commission itself, its credibility is at stake. It can ill afford a second three-year cycle without any substantive result. We all have a common responsibility or, to quote an American politician who is much in the news these days, "No one is exempt from the call to find common ground". I therefore urge member States to focus on areas of potential consensus

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and not to linger on issues that they know will not find agreement. We all need to avoid a meltdown. Our common house needs to be in order in three weeks' time.

I do not need to dwell now on the substantive issues on our agenda. They are the same as in the past two years and they reflect the fact that, when the original United Nations Disarmament Commission was created in 1952, it was a merger of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments. While substantive agreement on both substantive items on the Commission's agenda is not immediately a farewell to arms, it will be a clear signal that the period of stagnation that has troubled the disarmament debate is over — a signal that could also spur progress in related forums. I hope that, in a collective effort, we can reach such a substantive agreement.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I welcome this opportunity to address the Disarmament Commission, a venerable component of the United Nations that is as important today as it was when it was set up 56 years ago.

Let me start by congratulating Ambassador De Klerk of the Netherlands on assuming the prime responsibility for guiding this Commission. I thank the departing Chairman of the Commission at last year's session, Ambassador Rosselli of Uruguay, for his strenuous and successful efforts to advance its work.

I came here today to underscore the importance I attach to this Commission, which performs a unique function in the United Nations disarmament machinery, serving as a deliberative body that reports to the General Assembly.

This session is especially important because it is the last in the Commission's three-year cycle. Now is the time for all member States to make extra efforts to seek a consensus. Those efforts are essential, given the vital importance of disarmament and non-proliferation in shaping international peace and security. We must all work together — the Secretariat, member States and civil society — to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in those fields. Failure is not an option. Its consequences could well jeopardize many other goals of the Charter and the security and well-being of all our member States.

At last year's session, I expressed regret that setbacks in the field of disarmament have become the norm, not an exception. I called on the Commission to move forward in a spirit of compromise and accommodation. Today, I am renewing that call with an even greater sense of urgency.

Countries across the world take very seriously the challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear arms, including risks from their continued existence, their geographical spread and the possibility that they could fall into the hands of terrorists. States are also highly conscious of the need to regulate conventional arms because of the risks they pose to security interests and the obstacles they create for economic and social development.

Despite a collective awareness of those risks and challenges, however, the world is still confronted with twin dangers: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the excessive accumulation of conventional arms. Multilateral cooperation remains absolutely indispensable in pursuing the noble goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. That is a solemn duty that cannot be fulfilled through confrontation, condemnation or the adoption of intractable policy positions. A true sense of mutual understanding and respect, give-and-take, and prudent flexibility are needed.

There is little doubt that we will not go far if each delegation proceeds expecting to achieve here and now nothing less than 100 per cent of its desired objectives. The pursuit of maximalist goals by some will yield only minimal results for all. Worse, we could see this institution itself decline under a cloud of pessimism and despair.

It is not a defeat to move forward today on those issues on which progress is possible and to pursue other goals tomorrow. There is no shame or loss of pride in acting according to the laws of reason, and there is really no responsible alternative. The international community must work together and demonstrate its resolve to move from challenges and opportunities to concrete results. Partial victories are still victories. Small steps forward are still steps forward.

Some may say that so much more needs to be done. That is no doubt true, but it is no excuse for lagging where progress is possible. Since it is indeed possible to make progress on the issues before the

Commission, I believe that this body does not have the option of closing its current session by relegating those matters to unfinished business. The time to finish that business is now.

The approach I am recommending does not amount to abandoning ambition or endorsing the lowest common denominator as the highest form of wisdom. On the contrary, I believe that incremental progress in this institution can have positive spillover effects across the United Nations disarmament machinery. It can also help in cultivating a positive climate for addressing disarmament issues in other multilateral forums, including those dealing with treaty regimes. In short, progress and success can be contagious; what is gained in one part of the system can benefit the whole.

That is true not just about the way we address the challenges of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; it also applies to the pursuit of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Although the international community has made some significant progress in that area in recent years — especially in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons — new conventional weapon issues are emerging, while old problems still demand solutions. The fact that conventional arms continue to kill many thousands of people every year is often overlooked, except, of course, by the States and individuals suffering most from the bloodshed.

The next three weeks offer a chance for the Commission to reach consensus on recommendations about the important issues at hand, bringing its three-year effort to a successful conclusion. I hope that members will take this opportunity to demonstrate the Commission's continuing potential as an important, even indispensable, part of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Let me also assure members that the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs is here to offer its full cooperation and support for their work. The High Representative and his staff, as well as their colleagues from the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, will continue to provide the Commission with all the assistance it needs.

I wish everyone an effective, successful and productive session.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: The agenda for this session is contained in document A/CN.10/L.57.

Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational meeting on 18 March 2008, the Commission took note of the provisional agenda and decided that no amendments were needed. Thus, at this meeting the Commission does not need to take any action on document A/CN.10/L.57.

Election of the remaining officers

The Chairman: As members will recall, the Commission is still to elect the Rapporteur and two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of Eastern European States.

I want to inform the Commission that the Group of Eastern European States has successfully completed its nominating process and we now have both candidates for the two posts of Vice-Chairmen. The Group has nominated Mr. Ivan Mutavdžić of Croatia and Mr. Hrachia Tashchian of Armenia to serve as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Ivan Mutavdžić and Mr. Hrachia Tashchian as Vice-Chairmen.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have also been informed that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Ms. Mónica Bolaños-Pérez of Guatemala for the post of Rapporteur of the Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Ms. Mónica Bolaños-Pérez as Rapporteur.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me on behalf of the Commission and the members of the Bureau to warmly congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and to wish them success in discharging their duties. I am sure that they will make an important contribution to the smooth work of the Commission this year. On a more personal note, I would like to mention that I shall count on their support and counsel.

Organization of work

The Chairman: Let me on behalf of the Bureau make some general observations on our future work. As members will recall, some issues concerning the working groups, including the election of a new chairman of Working Group II, were already discussed and settled at our organizational meeting. Here, I want to say a few words about the general debate at the plenary meetings.

In 2006, the General Assembly decided to encourage the Disarmament Commission to invite, as appropriate, outside experts on disarmament for discussions. Based on that recommendation, the Bureau last year carefully studied the possibility of inviting experts for this year's session.

Taking into consideration the principles of balanced geographical distribution and representation of all major schools of thought on two complex disarmament issues, as well as financial and organizational aspects, it came to the conclusion that it was necessary to further consult with the Commission on specific organizational and substantive aspects. During the course of this year's session, we in the Bureau intend to continue consultations with member States and expect them to guide and assist us in arriving at the right decisions.

Let me refer to some areas where decisions are needed. We have to decide within which format — plenary or working group — we should invite the experts to speak. Since the meetings of working groups are traditionally closed sessions, the Commission, as the master of its own procedure, has to take a decision that will constitute a major departure from the existing practice if we decide to open the meetings of working groups. If, on the other hand, the experts will be speaking within the plenary, then no changes to the basic rules of the Commission are required, except deciding on the format of the plenary meetings that has to be agreed upon.

In case the Commission should decide to invite experts, we will be faced with several options. First, we could continue with statements on all disarmament matters within the general debate, as is the case now, and at the end of each meeting allocate time for experts. Secondly, we could substitute the general debate with a structured thematic discussion that would focus on each of the two items under consideration, and experts could participate as a part of those structured discussions. The third option could be a combination of the two approaches, namely, to divide the general debate into two distinct phases: general statements for the first phase for member States only, and structured thematic discussions, in panel form or otherwise, for the later part, with the participation of experts, or setting aside one full meeting for such presentations and discussions.

A decision is also required on a somewhat unrelated issue, which was also discussed during the consultations, namely, a more active and direct participation of non-governmental organizations. The Bureau interjected that item at the request of member States, although the issue has not been addressed in agreed recommendations. Here again, it was concluded that there are no simple solutions and that we need guidance from the membership of the Commission.

It is our opinion that further consultations on those and other issues are needed in the course of this 2008 session before we start to practically implement such changes. Thus, I intend to continue those consultations with a view to seeking members' ideas and advice.

In closing I want to point to the fact that, next year, the Commission will be starting a new three-year cycle, as matters stand now, and the time could be very propitious for the introduction of an innovative approach to the format of the Disarmament Commission.

With those brief remarks, I now open the floor to delegations wishing to make statements within the general exchange of views. Delegations should feel free to comment on the issues I have raised regarding a somewhat different format for Disarmament Commission meetings in the coming years.

General exchange of views

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I would like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this important session. We are confident that, under your able stewardship, the 2008 session will yield tangible outcomes that can fulfil the mandate entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly. NAM also extends its feliciation to the other members of the Bureau and the chairs of the working groups on their elections.

NAM welcomes the Secretary-General and thanks him for his very important remarks. His commitment to and efforts in realizing a world that is stable, peaceful and prosperous for all humanity are most valued by us. The Movement would also like to reaffirm its support to the Secretary-General for his noble work in the areas of international disarmament, peace and security.

NAM underscores the importance for all United Nations Member States to abide by their commitment to the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as to the established norms of international law. Here, NAM would also like to reiterate its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as contained in the outcomes and documents of the various NAM summits and conferences on those subjects.

It is regrettable that there has been a regression on the internationally agreed disarmament agenda in the past few years. The Disarmament Commission has, unfortunately, also experienced setbacks in that respect. While one can identify many reasons to be despondent, our Movement remains optimistic and will always strive to take constructive steps to promote peace and security in our world.

The Disarmament Commission can be very effective, as seen in its numerous productive sessions, particularly that of 1999, when it was able to reach consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for conventional arms control. The work of the Commission has contributed greatly to the emergence of global norms on disarmament, but NAM is concerned that, since the 2003 session of the Commission, the Commission has been unable to play its due role.

We see the deliberative function of the Disarmament Commission becoming even more important in these times. The group remains firmly committed to the Commission's basic purposes and principles and reaffirms the centrality of the Commission as the specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery providing for an in-depth deliberation on specific disarmament issues, with the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

NAM wishes the two chairs of the working groups success in chairing the deliberations. We all need to support them fully in that regard. The group calls upon United Nations Member States to display the necessary political will and flexibility for achieving agreement on the recommendations based on the two agenda items of the current cycle.

NAM stresses that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to the strengthening of international peace and security. The Movement appeals to all States to pursue and intensify multilateral negotiations, in line with the consensus of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, with a clear goal to achieve nuclear disarmament. As agreed, that must take place under effective international controls and in accordance with the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regimes.

On agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", NAM reiterates its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation, which have been fully reflected in the relevant documents adopted by the summits and ministerial meetings of NAM, including the fourteenth NAM summit in Havana in September 2006. The vision and principles of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament also remain very pertinent here. The Movement highlights the urgency for all members of the Commission to fulfil their obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament, and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.

NAM underscores that nuclear disarmament constitutes its primary disarmament objective and remains its highest priority. In that regard, the nuclear-weapon States need to implement the unequivocal undertaking of accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. The group is very concerned at the slow pace of progress and, in some cases, the reversal on nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. In that connection, multilateral negotiations should commence without delay.

NAM again calls for the convening of an international conference at the earliest possible date, with the objective of attaining an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame to eliminate all nuclear weapons, as well as to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction. In that context, we would like to recall the resolve of the world leaders at the Millennium Summit, as contained in the Millennium Declaration.

With regard to that Declaration, we would like to highlight the focus on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and the intent to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear dangers.

NAM also reiterates its longstanding principled position for the total ban of all nuclear testing and expresses its concern over the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and the negative developments with respect to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

NAM remains of the view that, in the efforts aimed at realizing nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other. Wherever possible, these should be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

NAM believes that the international community's efforts to achieve non-proliferation should be undertaken in conjunction with concrete efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. It also believes that the most effective way of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.

We underline that the threat of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction should be addressed within the framework of the United Nations and international cooperation, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

NAM calls upon all Member States to support international efforts for preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We urge all States to take — and strengthen — national measures, as appropriate, to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and materials and technologies related to their manufacturing.

While noting the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1673 (2006), NAM underlines the need to ensure that no action by the Security Council undermines the United Nations Charter, the existing multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction, the international agreed organizations established in this regard, or the all-encompassing role of the General Assembly.

NAM cautions against the continuing use by the Security Council of its authority to define the legislative requirements for Member States in implementing the Council's decisions. In this regard, NAM stresses that the issue of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction should be addressed in an inclusive manner by the General Assembly, taking into account the views of all Member States.

NAM reiterates that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We reaffirm our conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a priority.

The Group continues to consider the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status as positive steps towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament. NAM welcomes the efforts aimed at establishing new NWFZ in all regions of the world on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. We also call for cooperation and broad consultation for this goal.

NAM reaffirms its support for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and to this end, it reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

NAM States parties to the NPT recall that the 2000 NPT Review Conference had reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, for achieving the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.

NAM States parties to the NPT remain fully convinced that the NPT is a key instrument in the efforts to halt vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. NPT is the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament, and the States parties to the NPT should work towards a fair balance between mutual obligations and responsibilities under the Treaty, with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

NAM States parties to the NPT call for the full implementation of, and the firm commitment by all States parties to, the package agreed at the 1995 NPT Review and extension Conference, which comprises the decision on strengthening the review process for the Treaty, the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the decision on extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the resolution on the Middle East and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in particular the 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty.

Regarding agenda item 2, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", NAM supports confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms as a way to strengthen international peace and security. Past and present times are unfortunately replete with sagas of devastation brought about by the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Innocent people continue to face destruction and misery because of these weapons. Hence, there is growing concern among the members of NAM about the situation with respect to conventional arms.

We believe that confidence-building measures are neither a substitute nor a pre-condition for disarmament measures. However, as has been demonstrated in various parts of the world, confidence-building measures have the potential to create an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament. We further believe that an unbalanced and incomplete approach to confidence-building measures, especially in some regions of the world, has not attained and cannot attain the desired results.

NAM maintains that confidence-building measures, especially when applied in a comprehensive manner, can be conducive to achieving structures of security based on cooperation and openness and can thus contribute to the wider objective of the renunciation of the threat or use of force. Implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures is important and should take fully into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region.

NAM expresses its firm support for the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures adopted by some Governments aimed at reducing their military expenditures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of regional and international peace and security.

NAM notes that, while some progress has been achieved in the working group, there remains work to be done. NAM is ready to engage constructively in the deliberations in Working Group II, based on revision 5, and urges all States to focus on the remaining issues for their resolution.

In conclusion, NAM would like to once again express its readiness and support in working with you, the Bureau, and the Chairs of the Working Groups to make the 2008 session successful. We also look forward to working actively and constructively by engaging in a transparent and productive deliberation with all members of the Commission with a view to reaching consensus on substantive recommendations for the two agenda items before us.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation is honoured to speak in this general debate on behalf of the members of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, Mexico.

The Rio Group would like at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador De Klerk, on your election to preside over the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, with which we conclude a cycle that began three years ago. Likewise, we would like to thank the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin, and Mr. Carlos Perez of Brazil, who is replacing Mr. Carlos Duarte. Our congratulations go also to the Vice-Chairmen of the Commission. We reiterate our readiness to help them bring their difficult task to a successful conclusion.

The Group takes this opportunity to express its recognition to the team that, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Elbio Rosselli of Uruguay, guided the substantive session of 2007.

The Rio Group thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for being with us today and for his statement, which demonstrates his commitment to the disarmament agenda with the sense of urgency that it requires. We also thank Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Rio Group notes with concern the lack of substantive agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Rio Group members form part of the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone in the planet, established more than 40 years ago. This signifies our region's commitment and sense of responsibility in matters of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, we call again on nuclear-weapon States to adopt concrete measures to move ahead in the reduction of their arsenals, stressing the responsibility that these States bear in the implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

The Rio Group reiterates its solidarity with the other nuclear-weapon-free zones and urges the establishment or expansion of such zones in other regions. We echo the call of the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw the interpretative statements they made when acceding to the Protocols of the aforementioned hemispheric Treaty.

We take note of recent official announcements by some of the nuclear-weapon States that are intended to review their nuclear policies. We hope that this will be conducive to the attainment of the objective of nuclear disarmament.

The Rio Group reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It favours its universality and calls on States that have not yet done so to sign it as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice entitled "Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons". Likewise, we consider that States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should comply with the Treaty in its entirety, without interpreting or implementing it in a selective manner.

We reaffirm the need to respect the right of States to research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to receive transfers of material, equipment, scientific information and technology for such purposes, in the context of international law and in conformity with the obligations undertaken with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Rio Group once again stresses the fulfilment of the 13 practical steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and the bolstering of security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we emphatically call for the conclusion, as a priority, of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. Such an instrument, more than any other measure, would provide a legal certainty and would guarantee a freeze on horizontal proliferation, making it unjustifiable and illegitimate.

The Rio Group also favours the launching of negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral and non-discriminatory international treaty including an international verification regime on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. This would be the next logical step in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In particular, it would be a concrete action to renew the commitment of nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to fulfil their obligations under article VI.

In the same spirit, the Rio Group must express its concern regarding signs of an arms race in outer space. In that connection, we invite all States to conclude the international agreements necessary to prevent such an arms race.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) plays an important role in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Rio Group supports its prompt entry into force, which would significantly contribute to a systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, as well as to preventing the development of new types of such weapons. The Rio Group welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Provisional Technical Secretariat with the view to prompt ratification of the CTBT. In that connection, we acknowledge Barbados, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, States within our region, for having ratified this important instrument. We congratulate Malaysia on doing the same. Once again, we call upon all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

The Rio Group reaffirms that full respect of international law and the adoption of confidence-building measures contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security and to the promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States. It is therefore necessary to strengthen, enhance and broaden confidence-building measures at all levels, in particular with respect to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the United Nations System for the Standardized Reporting of Military Expenditures, which are examples of important United Nations initiatives. At the regional level, we highlight the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.

The Rio Group attaches particular importance to the issue of ammunition. We believe it appropriate for the United Nations to focus specific attention on this issue, while acknowledging that the problem of small arms and light weapons is intrinsically linked to that of ammunition.

That is why the Rio Group considers it important to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. We hope that the third Biennial Meeting of States, which will soon take place in New York, will give us the opportunity to generate concrete results that will improve the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The Rio Group expresses its concern over the lack of political commitment by some States to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons, including those that have excessively cruel or indiscriminate effects. In that regard, we recognize the different processes being promoted by the international community to address the issue of cluster munitions, given their humanitarian impact.

With regard to the issue of common international criteria on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, the Rio Group expresses the hope that the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established to study the feasibility, scope and parameters of a draft legally binding instrument on the conventional arms trade, which is chaired by Argentina, can adequately reflect the diversity of opinion among Member States on this issue.

The Rio Group is fully prepared to cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, in achieving concrete results during this session, especially given that this is the last year of the 2006-2008 cycle of the Commission's substantive sessions. It would be desirable to make progress in all the areas being considered. However, we should not allow progress in one area to be conditioned by equivalent advances in another. Taking into account the complexity of the issues, the insistence on the parallel unfolding of negotiations would in practice mean preventing the Commission from reaching at least partial results in its work. We call upon all delegations to show the political will and flexibility in their positions necessary to make a good outcome possible.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): It is a pleasure for my delegation to see you, Sir, as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session. Please accept our warm congratulations on your election, as well as the assurance of the full cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours.

The Brazilian delegation associates itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. We also welcome the speech made earlier today by the Secretary-General and hope that his remarks will inspire our deliberations.

We are at the end of a three-year cycle in the Disarmament Commission. The two Working Groups — entrusted, respectively, with the issue of ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and that of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — held extensive deliberations and are working on documents that we consider to be a good basis for agreement. A meaningful and generally agreed outcome is possible and long overdue.

Achieving substantive results in the Disarmament Commission is even more important in view of the recent lack of progress in disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations. Negative developments such as the deadlock in the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the paralysis at the Conference on Disarmament, the continued delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the lack of agreement regarding the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms — disturbing as they may be — must not detract us from persevering in the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation within the United Nations framework. The Disarmament Commission is the agreed forum for that essential exercise and has, in our view, a key role to play.

Working Group I will once again carry on its deliberations in an international scenario in which nuclear disarmament is far from a reality. Over the past few years, we have noticed a worrisome development through which renewed emphasis has been placed on non-proliferation and less and less attention is being paid to nuclear disarmament. The modest achievements made in this field have only a very precarious basis, as they are not the result of multilaterally negotiated, irreversible and verifiable agreements and thus can easily be rolled back.

The growing emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation mechanisms must be accompanied by similar efforts in terms of disarmament and the enhancement of international cooperation for the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Instead, regretfully, we see that new rationales are sought to justify the maintenance of current stockpiles or the development of new and more sophisticated nuclear weapons. Furthermore, nuclear-weapon States leave little doubt as to their intention not only to keep their nuclear arsenals indefinitely but also to modernize and improve them, in direct conflict with their obligations under the NPT. So long as the States that possess nuclear weapons continue to believe that those weapons constitute a critical element of their security strategy, the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons will remain elusive and distant. Reducing the role of these weapons in strategic and security doctrines and policies is therefore essential for realizing the goal of nuclear disarmament.

We expect those concerns to be duly reflected in the paper to be produced by Working Group I, so that recommendations on these issues, which are of great importance to the overwhelming majority of Member States, can be forwarded to the General Assembly.

Let me underline that Brazil deeply appreciates the confidence that you, Mr. Chairman, and the Commission expressed in endorsing a Brazilian official to continue to chair Working Group II. I wish to highlight that the work done in the Group over the past two years has produced a text that we believe can form the basis for an agreement.

Confidence-building measures aim to alter inaccurate perceptions and to avoid misunderstandings about military actions and policies that might otherwise provoke violent conflict. Over time, they can pave the way for more stable political and diplomatic relations, transform parties' ideas about their need for security and even encourage moves to identify shared security interests and highlight the importance of effective disarmament initiatives. Confidence-building measures, in particular in the field of conventional weapons, have become important steps in building the trust, stability and security needed to overcome conflict and enhance efforts at development.

A range of confidence-building measures are available and are being actively used to pave the way for disarmament, reduce tensions and avert possible military conflict. They have proven to be effective, and innovative ways to use them are being applied. Confidence-building measures have often also addressed the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons — a problem that poses one of the greatest arms-related challenges to peace and security for many countries, especially in Africa.

The issues we address in the two Working Groups are distinct in nature and in scope. Advances in one cannot be made contingent upon progress in the other. Delegations should engage in deliberations in good faith and exercise sufficient flexibility, with a view to reaching our common objective.

The Disarmament Commission is a deliberative body with universal participation, dedicated to long-term discussion of disarmament issues, with a view to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. It is not a forum that negotiates legally binding agreements. It therefore does not operate under the constraints that characterize such negotiations. In view of the need to achieve concrete results at the end of this cycle, it is especially important that delegations engage in the discussions in a constructive spirit, as they seek to overcome the remaining differences.

The Disarmament Commission was created at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to serve as a forum for all United Nations Member States to deliberate on major disarmament issues. The Commission has since produced several useful recommendations that prepared the ground for multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The enormous challenges confronting the Disarmament Commission call for a deeper sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Brazil believes that the Commission remains relevant as a means to explore new avenues towards disarmament. It is up to us to take advantage of this opportunity to restore that sense of purpose to our deliberations.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau and to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups. We wish also to express our appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement and to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Cuban delegation expresses its full support for the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); it clearly reflected the Movement's principled positions and priorities in the disarmament sphere, as set out in documents adopted at NAM summits and ministerial meetings, including the fourteenth summit, held in Havana in September 2006.

Recent years have been marked by an impasse in the multilateral disarmament agenda, and this has not left the Disarmament Commission unaffected. It is worrying that no concrete results have been achieved since 2003. Unfortunately, despite the proclaimed end of the cold war several years ago, world military expenditure, far from being reduced, continues to increase at an alarming rate. This year alone, the world's main investor in weaponry, the United States, may alone be devoting more than $700 billion to such expenditures — 48 per cent of the world total.

In itself, increasing military spending arouses distrust and legitimate international concern. We cannot remain on the sidelines faced with this situation. It is counterproductive that world military expenditures continue to exceed by far the funds devoted to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. These facts must be addressed with urgent action. Cuba reiterates its proposal to create a fund, managed by the United Nations, to which at least half of current military spending would be allocated, in order to address the economic and social development of the countries in need. That initiative, besides its obvious benefits, could have the added value of being a confidence-building measure.

The Disarmament Commission is entering the third year of its cycle of deliberations on two highly relevant items. It is in our hands to take concrete steps towards general and complete disarmament. The work that the multilateral disarmament machinery will carry out in the near future will largely depend on the outcome of this session.

Nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to the entire human race. Thousands of them are ready for immediate use. Far from making progress on their destruction, the nuclear Powers persist in modernizing them. The very existence of nuclear weapons, along with doctrines prescribing their possession and use, constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security. Cuba reaffirms the historical position of the Non-Aligned Movement that nuclear disarmament is, and must continue to be, the highest priority in the sphere of disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon States have the legal obligation not only to pursue but also to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The relevance of nuclear disarmament cannot be ignored or downplayed. It is known that some have the intention of promoting an approach of selective non-proliferation; here, the problem lies not in the existence of nuclear weapons, but in the "good" or "bad" behaviour of those that have them.

Cuba categorically rejects selective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The obligations undertaken on nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be pushed into the background within the framework of the

Treaty. We strongly support respect for the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in strict compliance with the commitments undertaken under the NPT. Likewise, we endorse the conclusion, as a priority matter, of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States.

We appreciate the efforts carried out by Mr. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, Chairman of Working Group I, charged with consideration of the item entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". We think his efforts to advance the group's work and to try to close the gap in the positions of member States in order to achieve the successful conclusion of the present cycle are particularly useful. The Cuban delegation is ready to continue to cooperate in this regard.

On the other hand, we are seriously concerned at the lack of political will of some delegations — fortunately in the minority — to achieve concrete progress in Working Group I. We hope that at the present session we will all show the serious-mindedness needed to advance towards the achievement of our goals, generating concrete recommendations to make progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Cuban delegation is ready to consider a variety of options for the Working Group I outcome document. We reaffirm that any outcome will have to be the subject of substantive negotiations and enjoy consensus among member States.

Regarding the item "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", we reiterate that Cuba support such measures as a way to strengthen international peace and security, as long as they fully respect the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Because they are voluntary in nature, confidence-building measures must not be imposed. The success of this process will depend on the achievement of true consensus among States. There are no single recipes. In order for the confidence-building measures to be really effective, they must respond to situations specific to the country or region in question.

Although there is much to be done, considerable progress has been made in the work of Working Group II. We consider that the latest working document submitted by its Chairman constitutes an excellent basis for success in our deliberations on this issue. We wish much success to the fraternal delegation of Brazil — and in particular we wish every success to Mr. Carlos Luís Dantas Coutinho Perez in the performance of his task as Chairman of the Group.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to reiterate the Cuban delegation's full support to you in your work.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its present session. I am convinced that, with your vast experience and diplomatic skill, you will lead this session to success. My delegation assures you and other delegations of its full cooperation.

In recent years, the overall process of international arms control and disarmament has been at a low ebb. There is still a long way to go towards complete nuclear disarmament. The nuclear non-proliferation regime is facing severe challenges. Military and security factors are becoming more prominent in international relations. Against that backdrop, our deliberations on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons have genuine significance.

This is the last session of the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission's deliberations. Over the past two years, we have had in-depth exchanges of views on both agenda items. In spite of divergent views on some issues, our work has achieved certain progress. China appreciates the efforts of the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups in pursuit of consensus and is ready to further consider the relevant draft texts.

During the two most recent sessions of the Disarmament Commission, the Chinese delegation elaborated upon its positions, proposals and policies on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following points.

First, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are closely related to international security. A sound international security environment will give impetus to and guarantee the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation process. The nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation effort will, in turn, contribute to the establishment of a solid foundation for international security.

The international community should abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms of international law in promoting the building of a harmonious world of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation and in establishing an international environment of peace, stability and common security so as to eliminate the motivation for keeping or seeking nuclear weapons and create the necessary conditions for the realization of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation complement and reinforce each other. All States parties should fully implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in an earnest way and strive to promote substantive progress in the current NPT review process. The relationship among nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be appropriately addressed, and nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation should be advanced in a balanced way. The legitimate rights of all countries to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be fully guaranteed and respected while the goal of non-proliferation is realized.

Thirdly, the complete and thorough disarmament of nuclear weapons cannot be accomplished overnight. It should be achieved through systematic, gradual and specific measures on the basis of safeguarding the strategic balance and stability of the world. In that regard, the two States with the largest nuclear arsenals bear special and primary responsibilities for nuclear disarmament. They should continue to take the lead in reducing their nuclear arsenals significantly in a verifiable and irreversible manner. The nuclear-weapon States should renounce the doctrine of first use of nuclear weapons, unconditionally undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and conclude relevant international legal instruments.

The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should reach consensus on its programme of work as soon as possible so as to carry out substantive work on nuclear disarmament, security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, fissile material cut-off and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The international community should continue promoting the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Fourthly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons has complex causes. It is therefore necessary to address both the root causes and the symptoms in a comprehensive manner. We should advance nuclear non-proliferation under the guidance of multilateralism and ensure impartiality and non-discrimination. Embargoes and pressure can hardly offer a fundamental solution to proliferation concerns. The countries in question should commit themselves, on the basis of consultation on an equal footing and mutual respect, to enhancing dialogue, building confidence, normalizing their relations, and maintaining and promoting peace and stability so as to create the conditions necessary for the realization of nuclear non-proliferation.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China faithfully upholds its nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation responsibilities and obligations, as stipulated by the NPT. It has always exercised the utmost restraint on the scale and development of its nuclear weapons. China has not and will not take part in a nuclear arms race. It has consistently pursued a policy of unconditional no first use of nuclear weapons and no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China is strictly implementing its international nuclear non-proliferation obligations and is focusing greater attention on and actively participating in the relevant international efforts.

Working hard to promote the peaceful resolution of regional nuclear issues, we have always advocated the peaceful settlement of the Korean peninsula nuclear issue. As part of the joint efforts of the parties concerned, China has contributed to the convening of the six-party talks with a view to achieving the denuclearization of the peninsula. Pursuing our unremitting efforts to actively mediate among the parties, we will do our best to help overcome the current difficulties, maintain the momentum of the six-party talks and facilitate the denuclearization process so as to ensure the peace, security and stability of the Korean peninsula.

China has consistently striven for the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomatic efforts and negotiations. It advocates the strict implementation of international non-proliferation obligations and respect for the legitimate rights of all countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Diplomatic negotiation is the best way to solve the Iranian nuclear issue and serves the common interests of the international community. All parties should intensify diplomatic efforts to reach agreement on possible ways to resume negotiations at an early date with a view to seeking a long-term, comprehensive and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

China supports confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Deliberations on that agenda item in the Disarmament Commission in recent years reflect some common ground among the parties concerned, as well as the complexity and sensitivity of the issue.

The issue of conventional arms touches upon the major security concerns of various countries. Confidence-building measures, on a voluntary basis and in conformity with the security interests of the countries concerned, are truly conducive to building confidence among countries. In promoting confidence-building measures, we need to take into consideration the comfort level of the parties concerned and avoid elements that may give rise to serious divergence. We need to develop confidence-building measures in the light of the specific situation and moment in different regions, with an objective and pragmatic approach and in a step-by-step and incremental manner.

China has unswervingly followed the road of peaceful development and pursued a defensive national defence policy. In recent years, China has actively promoted and participated in regional disarmament and confidence-building measures. Within such frameworks as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, China has been working with relevant countries to vigorously explore and implement confidence-building measures aimed at enhancing mutual trust and promoting regional security. Last year, China began annual reporting of its military expenditures to the United Nations and resumed its participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Those represent renewed efforts by China in confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Our policies and actions demonstrate that China is a strong force in safeguarding international and regional peace and stability. China's development will not constitute any threat to any other country.

On the basis of the aforementioned principles and positions, China is prepared to make concerted efforts with all other parties to promote progress on the two agenda items being considered by the Disarmament Commission at its present session.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, I should like, on behalf of the Pakistan delegation, to felicitate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. We believe that this session is an important one and could make an important contribution to the process of disarmament. We also would like to congratulate the Vice-Chairs, the Chairs of the Working Groups and the other members of the Bureau. We look forward to extending our full cooperation to you and the other office bearers of the Commission. It is particularly auspicious to see Sergio Duarte, who is leading the disarmament work of the United Nations with such dynamism, here with us this morning.

We align ourselves with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as enunciated by the representative of Indonesia.

Every State has the right to security, as recognized under the United Nations Charter. The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (General Assembly resolution S-10/2) enshrined the principle of equal security for all States. That is a goal for which we should continue to strive in a world that is unequal politically, economically and, especially, militarily.

Pakistan is convinced that credible security can flow only from a cooperative approach and from the construction of collective security within a rule-based international order. It is therefore imperative that unilateralism or exclusive approaches yield to an agreed multilateral approach to disarmament.

Pakistan has pursued the goal of effective and cooperative security at the bilateral level, the regional level and the international level. Given the special circumstances in our region, Pakistan adheres to the policy of credible minimum deterrence as a means of promoting and preserving security in South Asia.

The global consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation has eroded over the past decade and a half, owing to several reasons, such as the unwillingness of certain Powers to give up their nuclear weapons; the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons; a stillborn Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the ongoing nuclear development and deployment of nuclear weapons by certain States; the perceived threat of proliferation, even from within the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the technological capability of several non-nuclear-weapon States to develop nuclear weapons at short notice; large stockpiles of fissile material; the addition of the threat from non-State actors to the equation; the discriminatory application of non-proliferation norms; the failure of collective means to counter proliferation; the exacerbation of asymmetries that have upset military balances in the regional and global contexts; and, last but not least, the progressive militarization of outer space, including through the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) systems.

We must revive the consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation. Unless there is a broad agreement on the goals and parameters that need to be pursued, it will be difficult to achieve breakthroughs on specific and selective objectives in this context. Pakistan has proposed that a special conference be convened to develop a new consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation — a consensus that responds to the new realities and challenges. We believe that it should reflect the following broad elements.

First, we must revive the commitment by all States to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. There can and should be no ambiguity regarding that objective. Second, it is important, in our view, to reduce and eventually eliminate the discrimination in the current non-proliferation regime and arrangements.

Third, it is important to seek ways and means to normalize the relationship of the three nuclear-weapon States that are outside the NPT with the non-proliferation regime. In that context, let me say that Pakistan supports negotiations on a fissile material treaty based on the Shannon mandate and the A-5 proposal for a universal, non-discriminatory and multilateral treaty that is internationally and effectively verifiable.

Fourth, we need to address new issues such as the danger of access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors. In that context, we consider the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as an important building block for international measures.

Fifth, we need to agree on universal and non-discriminatory rules that ensure the right of every State to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Sixth, we must enshrine universal, non-discriminatory and legally binding negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States until the goal of nuclear disarmament has been achieved. We also need to address the issue of missiles, but it should be addressed in its entirety, including the development and deployment of ABM systems.

Seventh, we need to strengthen existing international instruments to prevent the militarization of outer space, including the development of anti-satellite weapons. Eighth, we need to arrest the disturbing trend of escalation in the number and sophistication of conventional weapons, which has a causal relationship with the continuing reliance of some States on nuclear weapons. Ninth, we need to identify means of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

And finally, we need to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery, especially the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, as well as the First Committee.

At the same time, it is important to develop regional and international approaches to promote conventional disarmament and the reduction of military expenditures. Weapon possession should flow from the legitimate security needs of States, not from the desire to dominate other States Members of the United Nations or to impose one's will or worldview on others. Pakistan is strongly opposed to any arms race at the regional or the global level.

The obstacles to reviving the disarmament process are many and seemingly insuperable. But the stakes are too high for the international community to resign itself to a perpetual deadlock. Political will and a genuine empathy for the security concerns of other States, especially the smaller States, can lead in the direction of a genuine and agreed multilateral process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

To find a meaningful solution, we need a comprehensive approach that addresses the different facets of the issue with equality and commitment. The Disarmament Commission can play a very important role, the role that was envisaged for it in the Final Document of the First Special Session on Disarmament, that is, to clarify the issues, to identify the possible areas for negotiation and to help in reviving a genuine consensus on nuclear and conventional disarmament and non-proliferation. That consensus, evolved in this Commission, could then be adopted and sanctified in a special conference held under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, please allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session, as well as to all the members of the Bureau. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups for the revised informal papers that they have submitted, which will serve as a basis for our discussions.

Kazakhstan looks forward to working closely with fellow delegates to achieve, under the Chairman's able guidance, substantive progress in addressing the important issues under the Commission's two agenda items.

The history of independent Kazakhstan is inextricably linked with disarmament. When it closed a nuclear test site and denounced its nuclear arsenal in the early stages following its independence, Kazakhstan set a highly responsible example for current and future generations by convincingly demonstrating that it is not nuclear arsenals, but a peaceful foreign policy, internal stability and sustainable economic and political development that in fact provide real security.

In September 2006, Kazakhstan, along with other Central Asian States, signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, the creation of which was a significant contribution to stability and security in Asia. This successful regional initiative also concerns the potential strength of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

It is widely recognized that there has been a lack of real progress and that the international community has failed to effectively resolve the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, due mostly to the absence of consensus and political will. First of all, the NPT, the main instrument of the nuclear non-proliferation, has failed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and the appearance of new de facto nuclear countries. Furthermore, the threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists has significantly increased. In addition, we have seen no evidence of nuclear Powers meeting their commitments on the reduction of their arsenals.

In this regard, at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, called upon the nuclear States to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons, thus creating an example for others to follow, and to undertake measures to maintain the efficiency of the NPT and to strengthen the nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime.

We are convinced that it is necessary to develop mechanisms for applying effective leverage on the States that possess nuclear weapons that act outside of the NPT legal framework and to provide instruments for putting pressure on those States that would attempt to leave the Treaty in the future.

Kazakhstan has repeatedly proposed drafting an internationally binding document against the use or threat of use of the nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries. We are also interested in pursuing discussions on negative security assurances, as this matter is closely related to the nuclear disarmament process.

The destabilizing effect of the accumulation and/or proliferation of conventional weapons continues to be a key factor in security and stability in the world. Criminal and terrorist groups as well as radical religious movements are actively engaged in illicit arms trafficking.

The Commission's agenda item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons" therefore presents a very important and effective element in strengthening regional and global security. To that end, we should elaborate a broad spectrum of practical components, including, inter alia, establishing direct and open communications, arms control, verification, and monitoring programmes. We hope our deliberations on that agenda item will significantly contribute to productive work in the upcoming Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

It is important to keep moving towards our common goals, as even small steps in the right direction can lead to great achievements. As the mandate of the Commission is of a deliberative character, I believe that we have enough political will and readiness to formulate meaningful recommendations on the issues of this three-year cycle that will contribute to the multilateral machinery of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over the Disarmament Commission at this year's session. I am confident that, under your able guidance and leadership, the 2008 session will succeed in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly. I should also like to extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election. In addition, I wish the Chairs of the two Working Groups every success in guiding their deliberations and call upon United Nations Member States to display the political will and flexibility necessary to reach agreement on recommendations based on the two substantive agenda items being considered at the current session.

I associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Iraq reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery promoting the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. We reaffirm that attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament continues to be our highest priority. We remain alarmed at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use, and we remain deeply concerned over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Security Council resolution 1762 (2007) of 29 June 2007 — in which the Council decided to terminate immediately the mandates of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the relevant resolutions and stated that the continued operations of UNMOVIC and of the IAEA's Iraq Nuclear Verification Office were no longer necessary to verify Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the relevant resolutions — reaffirmed Iraq's disarmament obligations under the relevant resolutions; acknowledged Iraq's constitutional commitment to the non-proliferation, non-development, non-production and non-use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and of associated equipment, material and technologies for use in the development, manufacture, production and use of such weapons, as well as of delivery systems; and urged Iraq to continue to implement that commitment and to adhere to all applicable disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and related international agreements. Moreover, according to depositary notification C.N.819.2007. TREATIES-3 of 16 August 2007, Iraq acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on 15 August 2007. The Convention entered into force for Iraq on 1 February 2008.

We underline the need for members of the Commission to fulfil their obligations related to nuclear disarmament and arms control and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. We call upon all members to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and attaining their common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Iraq calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to refrain from nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangement, in conformity with their obligations, and to consider fully implementing their unequivocal commitments to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals, through an accelerated process of negotiations and through full implementation of the 13 practical steps aimed at advancing systematically and progressively towards a nuclear-weapon-free world, to which they agreed in 2000.

Iraq is fully convinced that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a key instrument in the efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and that it is the essential foundation for nuclear disarmament. Iraq reaffirms its commitment not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices, either directly or indirectly, and not in any way to assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices.

Iraq supports the call for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirm the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. We recall that the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT reaffirmed the importance of Israel acceding to the NPT and subjecting all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive IAEA safeguards, and of attaining the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East. Furthermore, we call for a total and complete prohibition on the transfer of any nuclear-related equipment, information, material, facilities, resources or devices and on the extension of assistance in nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel. At the same time, Iraq reaffirms the basic and inalienable right of all States to the development, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination.

Iraq reaffirms that the IAEA is the competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring, in accordance with its Statute and its safeguards system, compliance with its safeguards agreements with States parties, undertaken in fulfilment of their obligations under article III, paragraph 1, of the NPT, with a view to preventing the diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Iraq also supports the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Treaty, which is currently being considered for ratification by the Iraqi parliament, is aimed at enforcing a comprehensive ban on all nuclear-test explosions and halting the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, which could pave the way for the total elimination of such weapons. We reaffirm that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use and that it is the most effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and in conformity with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Iraq believes that it is essential that the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures be implemented by all States, taking fully into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a given region.

Iraq expresses its firm support for the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures that a number of Governments have adopted to reduce their military expenditures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of regional and international peace and stability.

Mr. Kim Hyun Chong (Republic of Korea): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission, as well as all other Bureau members and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their election. As a country that had the honour of chairing the Commission during the first year of the three-year cycle, I assure you of my delegation's full support for and cooperation with your work.

We are now in the final year of the three-year cycle and have the task of arriving at a consensus on concrete recommendations for the General Assembly on two important issues, namely, attaining the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

For the first time since 2003, we in the Commission have an opportunity to agree on recommendations for the General Assembly. I believe that now is the time for us to truly engage in a creative exchange of ideas, so that this forum can make its unique contributions in the field of disarmament. I sincerely hope that the result will be a building block, not a stumbling block, for the upcoming 2008 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Despite all the setbacks and challenges, the central role of the NPT as the normative foundation for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remains unchanged. We must enhance the integrity of and confidence in the Treaty, while striking a balance between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. That can be achieved only if each State carries out its own duties, without making them conditional on implementation by others.

The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the global regime for nuclear non-proliferation should be further reinforced. In order to increase global confidence in the NPT regime, the monitoring and verification mechanism of the Treaty needs to be strengthened. In that regard, we support universalization of the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also look forward to an additional extension of the mandate set out in Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Nuclear disarmament must go hand in hand with efforts for nuclear non-proliferation. We urge nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to continuously implement their obligations under article VI of the Treaty. Noting initiatives taken or planned by nuclear-weapon States, we believe that there is still more progress to be anticipated.

If the dual task of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation is to be accomplished more effectively, the first set of goals that the international community should work to achieve is early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the launching of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. We encourage all signatories to the CTBT that have not ratified the Treaty to do so at an early date, and we support the efforts being made in the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus on the programme of work.

Conventional weapons do as much damage to humanity as nuclear weapons. Recognizing and fully utilizing the existing confidence-building measures and promoting the role of the United Nations in this area are important in achieving the common, cooperative security of all Members.

In particular, the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons not only fuels conflicts but also hinders development. International efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including the United Nations Programme of Action, should be implemented and strengthened. To that end, the Republic of Korea will be hosting, together with Norway and the European Union, a United Nations workshop on the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument in Seoul on 27 and 28 May.

We note that the General Assembly, at its sixty-second session, welcomed the report by the Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. We would like to call on all Member States to implement the recommendations made by the Group, in order to address more effectively the problems caused by illicit brokering.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been successful in enhancing the level of transparency in military affairs, with an increasing number of Member States participating each year. Sharing objective information on military expenditures will greatly contribute to the sense of security of all Member States.

On the Korean Peninsula, we believe that putting reliable confidence-building measures in place between the two Koreas is essential for the promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the key to security on the Peninsula. That in turn would provide the basis for other cooperative projects between the two Koreas, which would also contribute to confidence-building.

Before closing, I would like to share a belief of mine with all representatives present here today, who are working towards the same goal of achieving peace and security through disarmament. For the past decade, we have been talking ad nauseam about the disheartening trend in the field of disarmament. The United Nations disarmament machinery has been criticized by many as being mired in arguments and lost in translation. In short, the Disarmament Commission has been a dependent variable in the field of disarmament for too long. I firmly believe that we have reached the point where we can reverse that trend and break the stalemate. All of the representatives here today already have the vision, the knowledge and the willingness to make the change. What we need to do now is to focus our capabilities on achieving a goal within our reach. Whether we become part of the problem or part of the solution, the choice is ours.

Mr. Ben-Shaban (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. We have confidence in your ability to lead our work to the success that we seek. Through you, I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement. We wish to make a few additional comments regarding the two items on our agenda at this session.

My delegation believes that we must ensure balance and non-selectivity in the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to break the current impasse in positions in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The cause of that impasse is found not in ineffectiveness on the part of the disarmament machinery, but in the lack of political will to pursue nuclear disarmament and to halt the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In that connection, Libya once again reaffirms its commitment to full implementation of the NPT. We demonstrated that commitment in practice when we eliminated, of our own free will, all our equipment and programmes that could have led to the production of internationally prohibited weapons. Libya believes that, ultimately, the only way to dispel the current fears over the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is to ensure the complete elimination of such weapons by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as swiftly as possible, including in the Middle East, in accordance with the decisions on the Middle East taken by the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and by the General Assembly, including, most recently, its resolution 62/18.

Unfortunately, the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons has not yet been reached. Moreover, the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has not been reached, owing to Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT without reservations, to eliminate its nuclear weapons and to place all of its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The provisions of the NPT must be applied in a complete and non-selective manner. I refer in particular to article VI, relating to negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and article IV, on facilitating — not limiting — the peaceful use and pursuit of nuclear technology. We reaffirm the importance of respecting the principles of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the outcome of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conferences and the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference — in particular the 13 practical steps as they relate to the implementation of article VI, specifically through a definitive commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals, leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Libya is convinced that progress on nuclear disarmament can help improve international security and contribute to non-proliferation. Libya calls for the conclusion of a legally binding, unconditional international instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear States, with a view to dispelling concerns about nuclear-weapon States meeting their commitment to completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

We also appeal for speedy implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), through the signature and ratification of the Treaty by annex-2 States as soon as possible. If made operational, the CTBT would be an important element of non-proliferation.

Turning now to the agenda item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", Libya believes that the adoption of effective confidence-building measures is essential to ensure international peace and security, on the basis of the principle that States have the right to self-defence, sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs, while taking into consideration each region's specific characteristics and security and defence situation. In our view, confidence-building measures cannot replace disarmament or be a precondition for it. They are, however, important for the creation of a climate conducive to arms control and disarmament, and that will be the case only if they are applied in all regions in a comprehensive balanced manner.

We totally support unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives to reduce military spending, because they help strengthen international and regional peace and security. On the goal of transparency and the

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, my delegation believes that these are selective and unbalanced because they are not applied to weapons of all kinds, including weapons of mass destruction, or to all aspects of the production, acquisition and stockpiling of weapons by States.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our ongoing commitment to the objectives of the Disarmament Commission. It is our hope that the Commission's work at the present session will result in consensus on serious, concrete recommendations on the two substantive items on our agenda. We are ready to provide complete cooperation in pursuit of that goal.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I wish to remind members that the list of speakers will close at 6 p.m. today.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.285

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

285th meeting
Monday, 7 April 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. de Klerk .... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Mr. Chairman, the Philippines would like at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election at this important session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We are confident that under your able guidance and leadership the 2008 session will yield substantive progress and results. The Philippines also congratulates the Chairs of Working Groups I and II and wishes them every success in their challenging work.

The Philippines, as one of the Vice-Chairs, likewise takes this opportunity to extend its profound gratitude to delegations for the trust and confidence they have placed in the Philippines and would like to assure all of them that it will do its utmost in performing its tasks and fulfilling its duties as Vice-Chair for the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by our colleague from Indonesia.

The issue of disarmament has become ever more relevant to our world today. We must achieve progress on this issue. We cannot afford to fail or delay action on it; hence the urgent need for delegations to be flexible and to have the willingness to compromise so that we, as nations united, with peoples hoping and clamouring for peace, can achieve our common goal of peace, established in particular through disarmament. Without disarmament, it is difficult to imagine how we can accomplish the goal of the United Nations, as solemnly enshrined in the Charter, namely, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The Philippines views the Commission as a vital mechanism in the area of disarmament. It firmly believes in its principles and objectives and assures other delegations that the Philippines will be as cooperative and as supportive as possible.

The Philippines respectfully submits that at the convening of this session there is a recognition that much has yet to be done by the Disarmament Commission and that the session must produce positive and tangible results. Let us now, with greater resolve, exert every effort to achieve such positive and tangible results, as the Commission's contribution to the continued enhancement of the architecture for a durable peace the world over.

The Philippines believes that in order to install a reign of lasting and durable universal peace and security, there must be progress in Commission's stalled work on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The elimination of nuclear weapons would stop or prevent the devastating and catastrophic terror that such weapons could unleash upon mankind. The Philippines is very concerned about the long-standing lack of progress — or, in some cases, the reversal of progress or outright retrogression in this area — in the light of the fact that nuclear-weapon States continue to engage in the qualitative

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development of nuclear stockpiles. Accordingly, continued multilateral discussions and dialogue on this issue should be patiently and persistently pursued.

The Philippines, in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, calls on all States to ban all forms of nuclear testing, given their harmful effects on our environment and their provocative nature and effects, which could lead to even more tests and improvements of weapons that should, in the first place, be phased out and eliminated from the arsenals of all States.

The Philippines devoutly wishes all States to fulfil their obligations and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and therefore calls on them to do so. Like other States, the Philippines fears the possibility that these types of weapons may fall into the hands of terrorists. We must prevent non-State actors from acquiring any of the various types of weapons of mass destruction.

The Philippines supports calls for the issuance of a universal legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. It reaffirms its belief in the undeniable usefulness of nuclear-weapon-free zones and would like to see more of them established. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to honour and respect these zones.

With regard to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Philippines believes that it is the ultimate cornerstone of all efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. States must therefore fulfil their obligations under that vital international instrument.

With regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, the Philippines submits that such measures are vital to achieving international peace and security. Although conventional weapons do not have the same devastating effect as nuclear weapons, they are just as potent and have killed or maimed countless hapless people. The rampant production, continued upgrading and indiscriminate use of these weapons must be stopped. The Philippines believes that confidence-building measures help establish a climate of trust, which leads to a reduction in tensions and, eventually, to disarmament.

Finally, the Philippines strongly supports all unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral activities undertaken by Governments to reduce military expenditures and calls on other States to do the same.

In conclusion, the Philippines reiterates its readiness to participate fully, actively, conscientiously and constructively in this year's substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. It hopes that, together in prayer for a world with durable and lasting peace and security, we will achieve significant progress and tangible results in the field of disarmament during this session.

Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau. I wish you every success in discharging your mission, while assuring you of our full support in this regard.

I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the efforts in the field of disarmament by the Secretary-General and by Mr. Sergio Duarte, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, since assuming his post last year.

Each part of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery plays an important role in mitigating the threats to peace and security all over the world, be it the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament or the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There is no doubt that the Disarmament Commission plays an indispensable role as the competent, deliberative body within this machinery that holds in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, resulting in the submission of concrete recommendations on them. Therefore, earnest efforts must be made to ensure that the meetings of the Commission's two Working Groups provide an opportunity to arrive at concrete positive results, each on its respective item.

Nuclear disarmament is the most important item in the universal disarmament agenda, but the five nuclear States designated by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) refuse to commit themselves to implementing the most important article in the Treaty, which is stopping the development of their nuclear arsenals and reducing them.

The work of the second Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be launched in Geneva this month. We would like to underscore the need to undertake the review process in light of the resolutions and decisions of the two previous conferences. In order for the second Preparatory Committee to succeed, all States parties must take sincere, practical positions and refrain from politicizing the decisions of the Committee, so that the 2010 conference will not meet the same fate as its predecessor.

In its international relations, the State of Qatar is committed to strengthening the NPT and consolidating its foundations, namely, the prevention of proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We emphasize the inadmissibility of compromising the inalienable right of the States parties to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and the need not to impede the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States parties to develop their nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes. The selective approach to the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty serves only to increase proliferation and intensify the race to develop the power of deterrence, instead of controlling them.

It is imperative to activate Security Council resolution 984 (1995), which is relevant to the Middle East, and establish a practical mechanism for its implementation, one conducive to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The States parties to the NPT, especially the three nuclear States that sponsored the Middle East resolution, need to break the silence over the Israeli nuclear policy, which contravenes the NPT and which will drag the entire area into an arms race and jeopardize Arab national security and that of the entire world.

Among the other challenges in the area of disarmament that pose a threat to international peace and security and that must not be overlooked, we would like to single out the following.

First, there is the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The results of the relevant Review Conference of 2006 were disappointing indeed.

Second, a source of profound concern is the proliferation of land mines such as those planted by Israel in South Lebanon during its invasion of the area. We condemn the failure of Israel to hand over the maps of the mine fields, in spite of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Those mines continue to claim the lives of civilians and to injure and maim them.

Third, we share the concern of the international community over the danger posed by conventional weapons and their continued development. Practical confidence-building measures must be taken in this domain, provided such measures are consistent with the United Nations Charter and that they are implemented on a voluntary, mutual basis.

Fourth, we note with concern the trend towards increasing world military expenditure, which has exceeded one trillion dollars annually. We all know the amount of international resources that this consumes, resources that could otherwise be used in the service of development.

The State of Qatar is party to many international conventions in the field of disarmament. It is party to the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the International Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Furthermore, the State of Qatar is currently studying other conventions and treaties with a view to signing or acceding to them.

The State of Qatar has taken part in all disarmament conferences and has supported all resolutions designed to promote peace and security in the world through disarmament. It also strives to enhance international efforts to create an appropriate climate to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT.

On the national level, the task of arms control and the prohibition of weapons have been assigned to a commission established for that purpose in 2004, which includes representatives of relevant ministries and State authorities. That Commission actively discharges its duties. It has recently concluded, for instance, the drafting of enforcement regulations for Law no. 17 of 2007, which was enacted last year with the aim of prohibiting the use, production, acquisition or stockpiling of chemical weapons by any person or party. Moreover, the Commission recently organized a national workshop to promote the Chemical Weapons Convention in the State of Qatar, to publicize the Convention and to exchange experiences in that regard, with the participation of 120 experts from State entities and the industrial sector.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to join all the previous speakers on congratulating you, Sir, upon your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections. We are confident that under your capable guidance and leadership, this session of the Commission will achieve fruitful results. We hereby assure you of our full support and collaboration.

The African Group would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to the Office for Disarmament Affairs for its continued service to Member States in promoting the cause of global disarmament and universal peace.

While agreeing with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the African Group emphasizes the importance of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body that examines and discusses specific issues in the field of disarmament and makes recommendations to the General Assembly. On that basis, the African Group considers that the Commission's current session is very relevant in terms of the overall objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. We therefore expect useful recommendations to emerge from this session.

The African Group reaffirms its absolute commitment to multilateral diplomacy. It believes strongly in the promotion of multilateralism in the field of disarmament as an essential way to strengthen universal peace and security, as well as in the pursuit of our common interests in this area. The African Group joins other Member States in the NAM in expressing deep concern at the growing resort to unilateralism in addressing issues of multilateral interest.

We in the African Group share the view that nuclear weapons pose a great threat to international peace and security and that the most effective means of achieving nuclear disarmament should be the commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer and the threat or use of nuclear weapons and on their total elimination. We reiterate that the principal of that objective should be a commitment by nuclear-weapon States to immediately stop the qualitative improvement, development, production and stocking of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems.

Pending the total elimination of those nuclear weapons, a legally binding international instrument should be established under which the nuclear-weapon States would undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and also not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

The African Group stresses the importance of ensuring that the meaningful nuclear disarmament process should be irreversible, transparent and verifiable.

The African Group notes the cardinal role played by the Conference on Disarmament as the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

We reaffirm that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The African Group emphasizes the importance of consolidating the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and establishing new such zones on the basis of arrangements freely reached by the States of the concerned regions. Nuclear-weapon-free zones indeed play an important role in the maintenance of regional peace and security.

The African Group welcomes all efforts at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East. The Group calls upon countries in the region to take practical and urgent steps for the full operationalization of such a zone.

Concerning the agenda item on confidence-building measures, the African Group remains convinced that the ultimate goal of such measures in the field of conventional arms is to strengthen international peace and security and to contribute to the prevention of war. Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms should fully respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The African Group notes with concern the recent trend of rising global military expenditures. The Group believes that the reduction of military budgets is an important confidence-building measure that can contribute to global peace and security.

We are further deeply concerned about the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and about their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, especially in Africa. We wish to welcome the ongoing Group of Experts on small arms and light weapons. We hereby call upon all Member States to give the group their utmost support in order to enable it to fashion a reliable universal instrument on small arms and light weapons.

Finally, the African Group calls for frank and genuine efforts by all groups aimed at reaching consensus with a view to making our world a better and safer place for us and for our posterity to live.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over this important session. You may rest assured of my delegation's support for your efforts to ensure that the Commission will have a successful session.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The agenda item dealing with the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is of great relevance to international security. The greatest threat to international and regional security and stability arises from the continued existence of nuclear weapons. At the time of the conclusion of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it was promised that the nuclear threat, particularly against non-nuclear-weapon States, would be removed in all its aspects, including through the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Not only has the threat persisted until now, but also we see that the commitment of some nuclear-weapon States to move in the direction of nuclear disarmament has languished. Some 27,000 nuclear weapons continue to exist.

The NPT is an agreement based on a basic bargain. According to the two components of that bargain, non-nuclear-weapon States pledged not to acquire nuclear weapons in exchange for the commitment from nuclear-weapon States to pursue nuclear disarmament negotiations aimed at the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

The 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission begins at a time when, on the one hand, it has been widely recognized that non-proliferation obligations are being successfully implemented except in cases of transfer of nuclear-weapon technology by certain nuclear-weapon States to non-parties to the NPT, and, on the other hand, today's situation of nuclear disarmament process seems frustrating and threatening to non-nuclear-weapon States, due to the unfulfilled disarmament undertakings and a growing threat by certain nuclear-weapon States against non-nuclear-weapon States.

Against that backdrop, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the overwhelming majority of Member States, maintains its position that nuclear disarmament remains the most important priority in the field of disarmament.

In recent years, a series of developments has given rise to the pervasive concern that some nuclear-weapon States have no genuine will or intention to accomplish the disarmament part of the NPT bargain. To depict the scale of this crisis, I draw the Commission's attention to some worrying trends and related developments taking place in the context of article VI of the NPT.

A dangerous trend has been initiated by certain nuclear-weapon States by which they reinterpret their unequivocal undertakings to nuclear disarmament. They cunningly assert that the fulfilment of their disarmament obligations is subject to the emergence of an international security environment, the definition of which is known only to them. In fact, they are establishing a precondition for compliance with their obligations, and it is they who will decide how, when and under what circumstances that precondition will be met. The speeches by the representative of the United States and the Secretary of Defence of the United Kingdom, made at the 2007 session of the First Committee and at the 5 February 2008 meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, respectively, are the most recent examples in that regard. By so saying, they not only flout that to which they have solemnly agreed, but also establish a counterproductive model for others — a model that is not in the interest of the integrity of the NPT.

I do not intend to recite the provisions of the NPT and of the agreements reached at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, but I wish to stress a few points in that regard. First, article VI is clear about the nuclear disarmament obligation: no conditionalities. Furthermore, in 1995, all nuclear-weapon States acknowledged the fact that

> "Nuclear disarmament is substantially facilitated by the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States which have prevailed following the end of the cold war".

It was in line with that recognized fact that, in 2000, they agreed to a blueprint, known as the 13 practical steps, for the implementation of article VI of the NPT without conditionalities. That is why the case against a reinterpretation of article IV is overwhelming. We must ensure that there is no place in this Commission or in the NPT family for such an arbitrary and irresponsible interpretation.

It is unfortunate to see that the same States are engaged in destabilizing the international security environment by either building or advocating a missile shield in Eastern Europe on the basis of declaratory assessments of hypothetical and non-existent threats. Furthermore, some nuclear-weapon States, instead of fulfilling their obligations as required under article VI of the NPT and the agreements reached at the 2000 Review Conference, have chosen to build new nuclear weapons and to modernize their nuclear-weapon systems. That is a very dangerous trend. For instance, the United States Administration, in an extensive and multi-billion-dollar programme, is seeking to build a new generation of nuclear warheads and new nuclear-weapon facilities.

This, together with the other anti-nuclear-disarmament policies and actions, constitutes intentional non-compliance in the context of article VI of the NPT and the agreements reached at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The instances of United States non-compliance with the Treaty's disarmament obligations vividly illustrate the challenges facing the NPT. We should discuss and address those cases in the upcoming Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, nuclear-weapon States undertook to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies as a step towards nuclear disarmament. It is truly regrettable that some nuclear-weapon States are acting in contravention of that obligation. They have adopted policies that have led to an increase, rather than a reduction, in their reliance on nuclear weapons. In recent years, this trend has been accelerated and has led to the prevalence of the role of nuclear weapons in international security. Clearly, the international community must oppose this tempting but dangerous trend.

After 2000, the United States included in its military doctrine the notion of using nuclear weapons in combat against specific targets. In 2006, the United Kingdom decided to procure a new generation of nuclear-armed Trident submarines and to extend the life of the related nuclear missiles well into the next century. And recently, France announced the addition of a new submarine carrying nuclear-armed ballistic missiles to its nuclear arsenal. The French President is quoted as saying, "French nuclear forces are a key element in Europe's security".

It appears that that country, in defiance of its international obligations, is seeking to find and define new roles and missions for its nuclear forces in order to justify their continued retention in the post-cold-war era. In so doing, they have even resorted to irresponsible methods, such as manipulating intelligence and fear in order to promote programmes that their people would not otherwise support. They will soon realize that their nuclear weapons have virtually lost any conceivable rationale, because the conditions in today's world have become so different from those that prevailed during the cold war.

Such developments, if they persist, will undermine the norms and principles of nuclear disarmament set out in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in the NPT and in the agreements reached at its 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences. Those norms and principles were established as a result of a long and painstaking multilateral process. We hope that the outcome of our deliberations within the Disarmament Commission will contribute to upholding those norms and principles.

Nuclear-weapon States need to take effective confidence-building measures by fully implementing their commitments to nuclear disarmament. In the coming days, the sincerity and the seriousness of nuclear-weapon States regarding their commitment to the objective of nuclear disarmament will be tested within the Commission.

Non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as recognized in the NPT, are of great importance. Those issues should be considered on their own merits, with due attention to the rights and obligations of Member States under the relevant provisions of the NPT. Unfortunately, non-proliferation has been manipulated by a few countries as a pretext for advancing their narrow national interests and for depriving developing countries of their right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The Commission needs to reflect on non-proliferation in all its aspects and to recommend certain measures to ensure the critical balance between non-proliferation obligations and the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

My delegation acknowledges the merit of a concise draft for successfully concluding our work on the first agenda item. The paper provided by the Chairman of Working Group I contains elements of a consensus document. However, there is still room for refinement and improvement in order to strike a proper balance.

With regard to the second agenda item, namely, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, I would like to briefly elaborate a few main principles on the basis of which, in our view, such measures could work.

First, confidence-building measures must be workable and must contribute to strengthening peace, security and stability when they are implemented reciprocally by two parties to an agreement. Thus, they must not be “one-way roads”.

Secondly, confidence-building measures must be merely voluntary measures and therefore must not in any way become legally binding obligations.

Thirdly, confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons at the international level have been manifested in the form of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Register itself was established on the basis of General Assembly resolution 46/36 L, which provided for further development of the Register and transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

Fourthly, it is a recognized fact that the transparency of thousands of conventional weapons is not comparable with the transparency of the existence or non-existence of a single nuclear warhead.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming our firm belief that we should make every effort and demonstrate a spirit of cooperation and goodwill with a view to making progress in the important task before us. The successful conclusion of this meeting will enhance the standing of this body within the disarmament machinery.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I wish to express to you, on behalf of my delegation, my warm congratulations on your election at this third annual session of the Disarmament Commission during the three-year cycle that began in 2006. I assure you of my delegation’s cooperation. Together with the other members of the Bureau, we will do our best to contribute to the success of the Commission’s work, which the international community so eagerly awaits.

Benin associates itself with the statements made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement at the 284th meeting and by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his important statement to the Commission this morning and for his appeal to Member States to step up their efforts in order to conclude this third and last session successfully.

Since 2006, we have given in-depth thought to ways in which the international community can overcome the challenges facing it in the two principal areas regarding which the General Assembly has requested the Commission to make substantive recommendations. That exercise has revealed our differences, as well as the alternative which humanity faces in the area of international peace and security, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We can choose between two fundamental options. On the one hand, we can seek security, and maximize insecurity for everyone, by engaging in an arms race, with confrontation, exacerbation of international tension and, of course, the risk of conflict as consequences. That is an option which the United Nations Charter tells us we must resolutely reject.

The second option consists of strengthening the collective security system established by the United Nations Charter, which calls on States to promote security through cooperation, given the global threats which face the international community. This approach involves an unequivocal commitment to general and complete disarmament, including the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantee against their proliferation and use.

Despite the very difficult situation currently prevailing in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, we must look on this session of the Disarmament Commission as a new opportunity and use it to steer humanity in that direction, clearly identifying the measures to be taken to make this option of security through cooperation a credible one.

The Disarmament Commission has a crucial role to play. As the sole deliberative body of the disarmament machinery, its function is to serve as a crucible for the forging of a new consensus on the course to be taken and the means to be employed to meet the challenges which the contemporary world faces. States must use this forum to reinvigorate multilateralism and boost mutual confidence, and they must find appropriate responses to their legitimate security needs without endangering the chances of survival of present and future generations.

In order to do this, the Disarmament Commission must make well-balanced recommendations aimed at achieving, in particular, the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, while recognizing the intrinsic link between disarmament and non-proliferation and the need to move forward in the search for a way out of the impasse in which the international community is currently trapped.

In this connection, my delegation reaffirms the vital role of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It also supports the treaties concluded for the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction with particular reference to non-State actors.

These international instruments need to be supplemented by an international treaty on negative security assurances, a treaty on the production of fissile materials and an international convention on measures to prevent the access of non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction.

Thus, if we remain faithful to the common goal of the progressive and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, we are bound to refute once and for all any attempt to justify as acceptable the use of nuclear weapons, the efforts of recent years for the improvement and modernization of nuclear arsenals and the continuation of programmes that encourage the proliferation of such weapons.

We appeal to the nuclear Powers to take agreed measures to promote disarmament and avoid the accidental use of nuclear weapons. We are extremely concerned about strategic plans that provide for the advance deployment of new strategic weapons, which are bound to fan tensions and revive the reflexes of the Cold War.

We urge the States thought to be engaged in clandestine proliferation to abide by international law in order to preserve the inalienable right of all States to conduct research and development and to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

As for our continent, Benin reiterates its support for the declaration and plan of action which were adopted during the African ministerial conference on nuclear power, held in Algiers on 9 and 10 January 2007. They were endorsed by the Executive Council of the African Union during its tenth ordinary session held in Addis Ababa on 25 and 26 January 2007.

As the African countries have done, all States should adopt confidence-building measures, which have taken on added importance in the light of the climate of suspicion that exists in the international arena with regard to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and with regard to the accumulation of conventional weapons. We must promote an integrated vision of confidence-building measures, taking into consideration the different perceptions of threats and challenges to the security of States in the strengthening of international peace on the basis of a balance in security.

The ongoing improvement of the efficiency of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention at various levels and the strengthening of world governance will no doubt contribute considerably to reducing the demand for armaments and creating conditions that are conducive to significant progress in the area of disarmament. To achieve this end, we must evolve towards a more equitable international system that can offer a framework for the prospering of all peoples.

Making the international system more equitable also requires more sustained efforts to ensure appropriate financing for development, in order to eliminate poverty, overcome pandemic diseases and attenuate climate change. The reality of this phenomenon is now well established, and its well-known consequences may lead to international tensions that increase the frequency of armed conflicts. It is also important to bring to a successful conclusion the efforts made to put an end to long-standing conflicts that have a negative impact on international relations. An example is the Middle East, where the creation of a zone of peace and cooperation free from nuclear weapons is an urgent priority.

Activities that help to erode confidence between peoples and that fuel armed conflicts include the exploitation of and illicit trade in high-value and sensitive raw materials. Such activities must be combated with determination, so that the producer countries are able to derive all the economic benefit they expect for their sustainable human development. Furthermore, it is necessary to stop the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. These weapons cause considerable damage in developing countries, comparable in every respect to what can be produced by weapons of mass destruction and should be treated accordingly.

We need stricter monitoring of arms transfers, and we should spare no effort to achieve the adoption of an international convention on the arms trade which takes into account all aspects of this issue, including munitions. In this spirit, Benin hopes that the next Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects will be crowned with success.

The serious global dangers that threaten humankind call for the mobilization of considerable resources to put an end to this situation. The level of military expenditure attained in the world is inconceivable and unjustifiable for poor countries like mine. The huge sums thus swallowed up are resources that are diverted from the essential concerns of humankind. In the spirit of the Charter, States should devote a minimum amount to arms, which is normal, and more resources to development and the improvement of living conditions in the world. Benin sincerely hopes that humankind will find the path of reason and work harder to secure its own survival than its destruction.

The inertia of the disarmament machinery is not alien to this harmful distortion. It has lasted all too long. The Disarmament Commission has produced no tangible results in the decade that is now ending. It must itself examine its role and the risks it would incur if it became insignificant and lost its raison d'être.

I wish to conclude by stressing the fact that it is of the greatest importance that all States participating in the work of this session show realism and the necessary flexibility to contribute to the long-awaited revitalization of the disarmament machinery in the higher interest of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.286

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

286th meeting

Tuesday, 8 April 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Klerk .... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

General exchange of views *(continued)*

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria): Mr. Chairman, joining other preceding voices, the Nigerian delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election. We believe that your diplomatic skills and experience in this field will guide us to a fruitful deliberation. We would like to equally congratulate all the members of the elected bureau. My delegation hereby pledges its unflinching support to you.

While we agree with the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement, as read out yesterday by Indonesia at the 284th meeting, and of the African Group, as pronounced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the 285th meeting, Nigeria wishes to reiterate its views on the issues on the agenda, as follows.

On the first agenda item — on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons — Nigeria laments that little progress has been achieved in those fields in recent years. We wish to reiterate our delegation's position favouring total and verifiable nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through multilateral diplomatic negotiations. To that end, we enjoin all Member States to demonstrate full commitment to the complete implementation of all the relevant instruments negotiated, in order to achieve their universalization.

On the subject of nuclear-weapon-free zones, we observe increasing efforts aimed at signing such treaties at the regional and subregional levels. However, we call upon Member States to show more political goodwill in order to fully operationalize those agreements.

On the issue of conventional weapons, we hereby reiterate our concern over the heavy casualties inflicted on our people by so-called small arms and light weapons and the serious threat that they pose to peace, security and development all over the world. Those arms must be curtailed and controlled urgently. While we feel somewhat encouraged by the ongoing meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms and Light Weapons, we observe that Member States still need to demonstrate further commitment to a universal legal instrument relating to small arms and light weapons.

With respect to the second item of the agenda — practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons — Nigeria agrees that the ultimate objectives of confidence-building measures are, inter alia, to strengthen international peace and security, to ameliorate relations among States and promote the socio-economic and cultural well-being of peoples of the world, and to prevent wars.

We believe that mutual confidence represents the cornerstone on which the foundation of the edifice of world peace and prosperity must rely. In view of the multidimensional nature of the issue of confidence-building, our delegation would like to encourage all Member States to show much magnanimity in their understanding of those aspects of world peace and security.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The overarching importance of the Disarmament Commission cannot be overemphasized, as it is the only all-embracing deliberative forum — aside from the General Assembly — in which Member States can participate in debates and the formulation of guidelines on disarmament. Moreover, this is now the last year of the Commission's three-year cycle. Nigeria therefore wishes to call on all members to endeavour to be broadminded with a view to achieving consensus on all the agenda items being debated.

Nigeria wishes the Chairmen of the two Working Groups resounding success, and once again we call on all Member States to show much broadmindedness in debate, greater flexibility in negotiations and unflinching commitment to the full implementation of agreements reached.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): On behalf of the delegation of Malaysia, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We join other delegations in expressing our full confidence in you, Sir, and in the fact that, with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will be able to steward the work of the Commission in reaching a tangible outcome. The work in which we are engaged to advance the disarmament agenda is challenging, a fact that is underscored by the stalemate in various disarmament forums, notably the Conference on Disarmament.

Against that background, the role of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body mandated by the General Assembly is invaluable. It allows all Member States to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. In that regard, my delegation wishes to emphasize that the process in which we are engaged should reflect that all-inclusive approach and that the outcome that we hope to achieve by the end of this process should, at the very least, enjoy the broadest possible support.

My delegation also wishes to emphasize that NAM submitted a position paper on nuclear disarmament for the proceedings in Working Group 1. Our priority is clear: achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament is the priority of the international community. My delegation hopes that this will be the underlying principle framing the work of Working Group 1, which should be captured in its outcome paper.

We would also recall that the General Assembly, at its first special session on disarmament — at which it established this Disarmament Commission — expressed in clear and strong terms that

> "While the final objective of the efforts of all States should continue to be general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the immediate goal is that of the elimination of the danger of a nuclear war and the implementation of measures to halt and reverse the arms race and clear the path towards lasting peace." (*resolution S-10/2, para. 8*)

Towards that end, it pronounced, in dire terms, that "mankind is confronted with a choice; we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation" (*ibid., para. 18*).

Some of the delegations here will participate in the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in Geneva. It is all too well known that the previous NPT Review Conference met with failure. We cannot afford another one. Notwithstanding that, some members of the Disarmament Commission are not party to the NPT. The Commission could be among the disarmament forums that could contribute to laying out the path to reaching a consensus at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. It would indeed be very useful for us, in the course of our meetings in the Commission, to exchange views and consider and make recommendations on various problems on the disarmament agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

While there are arguments that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are two different subjects, Malaysia remains convinced that they are two sides of the same coin. Malaysia's recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a good case in point. That action on our part contributes to constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to putting an end to the development of advanced new types of those weapons.

While our efforts should continue to move towards both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, we note with concern that more emphasis is given to nuclear non-proliferation. Only through the total elimination of nuclear weapons can we abolish their use or the threat of their use, which is the greatest threat to human existence. If our work at this session mainly highlights non-proliferation efforts, which are generally undertaken outside the multilateral framework, that would only add to the skepticism of the majority of Member States with regard to the motives of the nuclear-weapon States and would shake the confidence of this majority in the NPT regime.

We should be reminded that the NPT is built on three pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The Disarmament Commission should likewise maintain a balanced approach in considering those three pillars.

The NPT was built on the premise that States that did not possess nuclear weapons as of 1967 agreed not to obtain them and States that did possess them agreed to divest themselves of those weapons. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference reaffirmed that grand bargain. In 1996 the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion, underlined that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Momentous decisions such as those should continue to be reflected in the outcome of our session. Otherwise, those important decisions would fall into the realm of forgotten memories, constituting a step backwards in the efforts of the international community to advance international peace and security.

With regard to the other issue, being considered by Working Group 2 — practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons — Malaysia is seriously concerned by the humanitarian dangers posed by conventional weapons. The number of deaths and injuries inflicted by conventional weapons is staggering, qualifying them as de facto weapons of mass destruction. Malaysia supports confidence-building measures at the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, as they would contribute to strengthening peace and security internationally and regionally.

Malaysia has ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and completed the destruction of its stockpile of anti-personnel landmines on 23 January 2001.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I congratulate you once again on your election and underline my delegation's readiness to work with you and other parties for a successful session.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Arab Group, our warmest congratulations on your election as the Chairman of the Commission for 2008. We are all confident that your chairmanship of this session will be crowned with success. Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

The Arab Group, on whose behalf I am speaking, would like to align itself with the statement of Indonesia, made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

There has been increasing international concern over the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in a selective manner, particularly nuclear weapons; over the results of the accumulation of horrifying quantities of those weapons; and over the development of new lethal weapons that are being produced in more than one State, in total disregard for relevant international agreements on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It seems that certain nuclear-weapon States do not seriously examine their commitments regarding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, they try to undermine international commitments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disregard the promises they made to non-nuclear States. The most important proof of that imbalance lies in the attempt by those States to support Israel in an exceptional manner by providing Israel with nuclear material, heavy water, scientists and advanced technology, which allows Israel to manufacture nuclear weapons with which to undermine and threaten the peace and security of the entire Middle East. Therefore, the policies of those

States undermine their credibility and the claim that they work to achieve the universality of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Those policies indeed confirm that the motivations of those States, when they talk of such universality, are merely selective and condoning.

The reluctance by some international parties to implement the results and decisions of previous Review Conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and their attempts to discriminate serve to seriously undermine their credibility. As a member of the Arab Group, I would like in particular to refer to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. We must recall that the package on indefinitely extending the NPT would not have been agreed by consensus without the adoption of that resolution, which called for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. However, the region of the Middle East remains a glaring example of the Treaty's ineffectiveness in achieving security for all parties.

The Middle East is the only region of the world that has not been the subject of real international efforts to rid it of nuclear weapons. That has served to encourage Israel to acquire nuclear military capabilities free from any international controls. In that connection, we warn of the danger of continued international silence with regard to Israel's position. That position has evolved from vagueness about its nuclear capability to a public declaration of the fact that it possesses nuclear weapons, while the entire international community has remained silent. That means tacit support for an exceptional situation that has lasted for too long and has led the people of the region to lose faith in the concept of the NPT. That, in turn, has encouraged a revival of arms race, despite repercussions for international peace and security.

The General Assembly adopted by consensus other resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Other Assembly resolutions confirm the danger posed by Israel's nuclear armaments. On 29 December 2003 Syria introduced a draft resolution in the Security Council aimed at ridding the region of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Despite all that, to date no serious position has been taken with regard to the implementation of these resolutions. In that connection, the Arab Group calls upon the international community to do the following.

First, Israel, the sole country of the region with nuclear military stockpiles and weapons, should be called upon to adhere to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards. It must also dismantle all its stockpiles, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

Secondly, the United Nations and the IAEA should be accepted as the appropriate forums for serious discussions on ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons. That is a necessary precondition to achieving just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Arab Group supports effective efforts towards the implementation of the 13 practical steps adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which call for the verifiable and irreversible reduction of nuclear weapons under the multilateral international framework. We must acknowledge that it is necessary to agree on a legally binding formula to assure non-nuclear-weapon States of the non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them.

The Arab Group reaffirms the inalienable right of all States to acquire and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in accordance with article IV of the NPT. That is the only way to achieve the universality of the Treaty and to avert the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and it can be achieved by all States acceding to the NPT. Article III must be implemented in full cooperation with the IAEA.

With the exception of Israel, all States in the Middle East have become parties to the NPT. Israel is the only State in the region with nuclear military capabilities. The international community must understand the concerns of the peoples of the region in the face of Israel's dangerous military weapons. Numerous reports of relevant international bodies and Security Council resolutions have referred to Israel's nuclear capabilities. Resolution 487 (1981) was the Council's first on the subject. It explicitly called upon Israel to place its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards and called upon the IAEA to halt its scientific assistance to Israel. The most recent resolution on the issue was General Assembly resolution 62/18, which once again reaffirmed the need for Israel to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA comprehensive safeguards, so as to achieve the universality of the Treaty.

We must remember that the resolution on the Middle East was part of an agreed comprehensive package whose purpose was to ensure that most non-nuclear-weapon States would agree to indefinitely extend the NPT, provided that their problems and concerns would be addressed at a later stage. The 1995 Conference took it upon itself to work towards strengthening the Treaty and ensuring its universality, as well as to adopt principles and objectives aimed at the implementation of the NPT and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

With regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, the Arab Group would like to reaffirm that effective measures are needed to promote international peace and security, while taking into consideration the principles of the right of States to acquire weapons to defend themselves, to State sovereignty and non-intervention in the affairs of States. The individual characteristics of each region and its needs with regard to self-defence and maintaining peace must also be considered. The Arab Group believes that confidence-building measures cannot substitute for disarmament, nor can they be a precondition for it. Confidence-building measures should be balanced and comprehensive throughout the world.

The Arab Group fully supports all unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral efforts to reduce military spending, which would help to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

With regard to transparency and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the Arab Group still believes that that approach is selective and imbalanced, for it does not cover all types of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction.

The most important criterion in making confidence-building measures credible, in the area of conventional weapons, entails fairly resolving armed conflict without the hidden agendas of influential States that are exporters of such weapons. The situation in the Middle East is the best example in that regard. The Israeli occupation of occupied Arab territory is directly supported by some major States that export conventional weapons. One could even say that such States undertake joint projects with the Israeli military industry in order to develop technology and export it to other States. That in itself encourages Israel not to accept the hand of peace extended to it by Arab countries, to continue its occupation of Arab territory and to escalate tension in the region.

In conclusion, the Arab Group calls for a full commitment to and full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is crucial that we adhere to that important instrument and provide full international support through the successful holding of the third biennial meeting of States, which is scheduled to take place from 14 to 18 July 2008.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We wish you and the members of the Bureau much success in your work.

Belarus consistently supports a multilateral approach to resolving disarmament and international security issues. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and preserving the current system of disarmament forums, including the Disarmament Commission.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Belarus shares NAM's approach to disarmament and international security issues. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

With regard to the Commission's agenda item on recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we would like to note the following.

Belarus reaffirms that nuclear disarmament is a priority, and we emphasize the importance of taking concrete steps in that regard. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and one that voluntarily renounced its possession of nuclear weapons before acceding to the Treaty, Belarus believes that it is important to preserve the integrity of the Treaty, maintain a balance between the obligations and rights of Member States and confirm the unity of all key elements of the Treaty. Preserving the high level of trust that States parties have in the NPT is possible only if the Treaty itself, the package of agreements that made possible its indefinite extension in 1995 and the decisions of the 2000 Review Conference are implemented.

Belarus is convinced that progressively moving from simple to more complex bilateral and multilateral confidence-building measures will create a stable foundation for the prevention of armed conflict and the strengthening of national and regional security. Confidence-building measures are by definition voluntary and should be the result of openness and cooperation.

For our part, Belarus is carrying out a responsible and consistent policy in the area of conventional arms control. We reaffirm our commitment to the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty as one of the key international agreements on arms control. We call upon all partners under the Treaty to step up their efforts to ratify and bring into force the CFE Adaptation Agreement.

Belarus attaches great importance to the development of bilateral confidence-building measures on the basis of 1999 Vienna Document. As a result of work done between 2001 and 2004, agreements on additional confidence-building measures were reached with neighbouring States.

We support the proposal to universalize and further develop the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. Since 1992, Belarus has regularly provided data to the Register. We also intend to continue to participate in the standardized instrument.

We consider it important to enhance transparency and to develop confidence-building measures as regards activities in space. The active development of space technology and the increase in the number of States with space exploration programmes make it necessary to continue work to adopt additional legally binding norms aimed at preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space. We support measures for the effective control and prevention of an arms race in outer space.

With regard to conventional arms control, Belarus supports further discussions in the United Nations framework on the issue of controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We believe it is important to comply with commitments under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as to implement to the greatest degree possible the provisions of the international document on marking and tracing. It is important to develop universal mechanisms to assist States in resolving problems related to small arms and light weapons. Belarus advocates drafting and adopting a set of measures to counteract the uncontrolled supply of small arms and light weapons, including man-portable air defence systems, under the aegis of the Programme of Action.

Regional organizations have significant experience in countering the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Major work is being done in our region in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There are currently OSCE projects under way in Belarus to enhance the security of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. We believe it is important to develop United Nations joint action with the OSCE and other regional organizations with experience in countering the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons.

Belarus supports universalizing the Ottawa Convention to prohibit anti-personnel mines. For our part, we will continue to carry out the complex task of destroying several million anti-personnel mines. We count on international assistance in addressing this issue.

We share the concern of the international community with regard to the problem of the possible use of inhumane weapons. In March 2008, Belarus adopted the amendment to article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In conclusion, on behalf of the delegation of Belarus, allow me to express the hope that the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission will be a success.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation and is committed to playing a constructive and active role in negotiations on those issues; Effective outcomes of multilateral forums are crucial. The issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, are essential topics for discussion. The Disarmament Commission has an important and unique role to play in that regard.

Australia would like to see real progress made across the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, including in this body. This Commission has debated some of the most important issues of global security, but meetings are not an end in themselves. Now, during this, the last session of the current cycle, the Disarmament Commission needs to show that it can help to address today's most pressing international security concerns. Australia sees both of the papers recently circulated by the Chairs of Working Groups I and II as constructive contributions to the debate and is committed to engage actively to work towards consensus in both Groups.

The international security environment has changed markedly in recent years. Globalization has increased the need for vigilance about States acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction. With the rise of transnational terrorism, we confront the possibility of terrorists fulfilling their desire to obtain and use these weapons. Government strategies must be multidimensional, making full use of the range of tools available in responding to that important challenge.

The major treaties and measures of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, such as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), are central to maintaining shared international standards. But Australia also strongly supports practical measures that reinforce the multilateral treaties, such as export control regimes. As many Member States know, Australia chairs the Australia Group, which seeks to impede the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. And, beginning in November this year, we will take up the role of Chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Australia has also readily embraced the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as an important new means to strengthen international cooperation on combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we are pleased that support for the Initiative continues to grow. We encourage those States that have not expressed support for the PSI to look again at the practical ways in which it can contribute to the security of us all.

We take this opportunity to remind members that a strong international nuclear non-proliferation regime is essential to a climate conducive to progress on nuclear disarmament. Australia encourages all adherents to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to respond robustly to the proliferation challenges typified by Iran and North Korea. Australia also urges all States to comply with and fully implement Security Council resolutions in that regard.

Like others, Australia considers that balanced and progressive steps towards nuclear disarmament are vital to the continued political strength and vitality of the NPT. Australia acknowledges the progress in the reduction of nuclear-weapon arsenals, and we encourage all nuclear-weapon States to entrench that progress through irreversible reductions in all types of nuclear weapons. We also urge non-NPT States with nuclear weapons to take similar steps.

Australia also supports the swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and immediate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as important disarmament priorities. We encourage all States, but particularly nuclear-weapon States and non-NPT States with nuclear weapons, to support those important international instruments.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. It is important that all NPT parties work to build on the qualified success of the 2007 Preparatory Committee at this year's Preparatory Committee session to ensure a successful role for the 2010 Review cycle.

Australia remains committed to addressing the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons through the United Nations Programme of Action. In addition to taking national measures to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we will continue to provide practical assistance to affected States in our region. Cooperation at the international level is essential, however, if we are to stem the flow of illicit weapons and reduce their devastating impact on people's lives.

Despite the enormous efforts of States to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines, they continue to pose a huge humanitarian threat and a barrier to development. In its previous role as President of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, Australia strove to promote the universalization and implementation of the Convention, through its President's Action Plan. In 2008, Australia will continue that work, which makes such a positive and practical difference. In a further demonstration of our commitment to this issue, Australia recently announced its contribution of $10 million to assist in further demining activities in

Afghanistan. That funding will help continuing efforts to clear mines, assist survivors and provide education to mine-affected communities.

Australia strongly supports the humanitarian goal of banning cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and to that end participates actively in both the negotiations taking place under the Oslo process and the Convention on Conventional Weapons. Australia also provides significant mine action assistance to countries where explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, pose a humanitarian hazard. In response to the United Nations call for assistance, Australia has provided $2.5 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service for mine clearance in Lebanon since 2006. Other support provided during the 2006-2007 financial year to countries affected by cluster munitions includes $7.4 million to Cambodia, $2.9 million to Laos and $3 million to Iraq.

Australia, like other countries, is concerned about the potential threat to international civil aviation posed by the acquisition and use of shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, or man-portable air defence systems (MANPADs), by terrorist groups. Australia continues to work bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally to help counter the illicit proliferation of MANPADs. This includes efforts to enhance the coordination of regional capacity-building assistance activities to help strengthen MANPADs export controls and stockpile management practices, and helping countries belonging to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation with the commitment they made in 2005 at Busan to undertake MANPADs airport vulnerability assessments.

Australia believes that the irresponsible or illicit transfer of conventional arms and their components is of such grave and pressing concern that it can be adequately addressed only through the establishment of a legally binding treaty. Australia was proud to be one of the co-authors of General Assembly resolution 61/89, on an arms trade treaty. We have taken our place on the Group of Governmental Experts with enthusiasm and purpose. That Group is tasked with examining the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument.

The issues discussed in this forum bear on the security interests of all States. They are too important for all members not to embrace during this, the last session of the current cycle. This opportunity to make practical and pragmatic contributions to address contemporary challenges should not be missed.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For Russia, strengthening the existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms and creating new ones where needed remain priorities. The Russian Federation consistently stands for strengthening the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and international security, genuine disarmament, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and arms control. We actively support the work of the entire multilateral disarmament triad — the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

In our view, it is important to promote greater stability of the international legal disarmament base, bridging current legal gaps in the non-proliferation sphere and preventing the emergence of a legal vacuum and new areas of confrontation and in the arms race, including high technology.

Russia is committed to the full elimination of nuclear weapons as a final goal. Achieving it is a gradual and complex process in which all nuclear States should participate and which should provide for the maintenance of strategic stability and the observance of the principle of equal security for all. We proceed from the need to ensure the predictability, transparency, irreversibility and verifiability of the process of the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons.

A pivotal element in the modern international security system is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Very soon, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference will be held in Geneva. The Russian Federation is interested in the work of this forum being as constructive and effective as possible, as it is called upon to create favourable conditions for the successful holding of the 2010 Review Conference. The important thing is to ensure the further viability of the Treaty, proceeding from the unity of its three fundamental elements — non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and disarmament.

Russian-American relations in the area of the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms are of key importance to real disarmament. Unfortunately, there is still no certainty about the future of this process. In December 2009, the treaty on strategic offensive arms expires. Long in advance — as far back as three years ago — we proposed the idea of developing and concluding a new, full-fledged agreement on further and verifiable reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons. Our goal is to preserve the stability and predictability in strategic relations between Russia and the United States. We cannot but feel concern over the situation when, with the looming prospect of the expiration of the treaty on limitations on strategic offensive arms, there are increasing efforts by the United States to deploy its global anti-ballistic missile system. It is well known that there is an inseparable relationship between strategic offensive and defensive arms, and it is impossible not to take that fact into account in future military planning.

Two days ago, in Sochi, the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States adopted the Strategic Framework Declaration. The document sums up everything that we have accomplished over the last years in the area of security and non-proliferation, including the Russian-American initiatives on combating nuclear terrorism. It also reflects the differences that remain between us, concerning, above all, military and political matters. The Declaration reaffirms the readiness of Russia and the United States to work on overcoming these differences.

Activities of States in outer space are closely linked to strategic stability issues. Free access to outer space and its exploration and use in the interests of all humankind are of vital importance for the development of science, the economy and maintaining international peace and security. Additional steps are needed to consolidate the efforts of leading nations for these purposes. It is essential to elaborate effective measures to keep outer space free from weapons of any type and to prevent space from becoming a new area of confrontation and a potential theatre for military activity.

The emergence of weapons in space could trigger particularly negative consequences for the international community. One may assume that if such weapons were placed in space the strategic situation would become less predictable, since space weapons have a global reach, high operational readiness and the capability to engage space objects in a covert manner and render them inoperative.

The placement of weapons in outer space could generate suspicion and tensions in relations among States. In contrast to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), which serve as a deterrence factor, weapons in space would be fit for real use. Modern international space law is not sufficient to prevent such a scenario.

On 12 February, at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, on behalf of Russia and China, a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, was officially submitted. We invited all States to take an active part in the draft treaty's consideration. Russia and other member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization have made an important step towards such a treaty. They declared that they would never be the first to place weapons of any type in outer space. We call on other States to follow this example.

Ensuring security in outer space is a common task for all of us, and we should jointly find a solution that would work to strengthen international stability. We have no doubts that the treaty is an effective and realistic way to achieve this goal.

In October 2007, President Putin launched an initiative for rendering global the obligations set out in the treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the elimination of their intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The initiative was supported by our American partners. Our common position was reflected in the joint statement on the INF Treaty that was circulated as an official document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly and at the Conference on Disarmament. The majority of the members of the international community welcomed it. However, there are States that are still not prepared to support the initiatives for various reasons. We take note of their approaches and would like to continue searching together for a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

On the margins of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, we intend to hold, jointly with our American colleagues, an informal briefing to highlight accomplishments of both parties in eliminating intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, as well as the positive impact of those accomplishments on European and global security. We are also ready to set out our approaches pertaining to the unofficial paper on basic elements of a comprehensive international arrangement on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, open for broad international accession, which was circulated on 12 February. We would appreciate principled support of our ideas as a promising objective on the way to missile and nuclear disarmament.

The Russian Federation stresses the need to concentrate the main efforts of the international community on combating supplies of illegal small arms and light weapons, strengthening national anti-trafficking legislation and practices and expanding regional cooperation to find specific measures to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of those weapons. We uphold the leading role of the United Nations in resolving the issues of small arms and light weapons proliferation. We believe that the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons has by no means exhausted its potential. We propose a detailed discussion of the ways and methods available to the international community to combat illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons at the third biennial meeting, from 14 to 18 July in New York.

We approve the way the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been functioning.

We support keeping the Disarmament Commission a universal forum functioning as an integrator of specific ideas and concepts, for adopting practical recommendations and outlining problems that call for multilateral arrangements. We believe that the Commission's existing status is sufficient to effectively facilitate the conclusion and implementation of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agreements.

In the intersessional period, we carefully studied the outcomes of the second year of the Commission's current work cycle. We are facing a challenging task — that of attempting to formulate General Assembly recommendations on the main items on the disarmament agenda in a document acceptable to all. We intend to present our specific proposals during the meetings of the working groups. We will provide more details during the dialogue on this topic on this and other issues.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, and all our colleagues that the Russian delegation is ready to contribute in every way to the search for a consensus.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation joins others in congratulating you, Sir, and the Bureau, as well as the chairs of the working groups, upon your well-deserved election. We remain confident that you will steer the Commission to a fruitful outcome.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia at the 284th meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, we have asked for the floor to underscore some issues.

The challenges before the Disarmament Commission are mainly two — first, addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and second, establishing confidence-building measures in the field of conventional armament. However, for the last few years the Disarmament Commission has not been able to make much progress on either of these two key disarmament issues. We want to emphasize that confidence-building measures should be neither a substitute nor a precondition for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are the two key instruments for achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the lack of political will on the part of some countries has made those two instruments almost non-functional. We reiterate our call for the universalization of the NPT and the CTBT. We maintain that the international community's efforts on non-proliferation should be matched by concrete efforts on nuclear disarmament.

At the national level, in Bangladesh we have tried, successfully, to become a party to almost every disarmament-related treaty, including the NPT and the CTBT. That has been a conscious and unconditional decision. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including an additional protocol. That amply attests to our unwavering commitment to the goal of disarmament.

The NPT guarantees the inalienable right of all States, in particular non-nuclear-weapon States, to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Those guarantees must apply without discrimination. We underscore the need for the IAEA to continue to pursue the goals of technical cooperation as regards peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

Bangladesh reiterates that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is in contravention of negative security assurances. We maintain that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against proliferation and such use or threat of use. Pending their total elimination, we reiterate our call for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Bangladesh strongly believes that regional approaches could be an effective tool for achieving nuclear disarmament. We appreciate the work of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the establishment of more such zones in all the regions of the world.

Bangladesh is deeply concerned about the alarming increase in military expenditures and its negative impact on our development agenda. Steps must be taken to de-escalate the arms race and free up much-needed resources for global socio-economic development.

Bangladesh believes that combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be a priority for the international community. We are dismayed at the lack of agreement on the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons. However, we are encouraged by recent developments in the field of cluster munitions. Bangladesh also welcomes the ongoing work of the Group of Governmental Experts established to study the viability, scope and parameters of a draft legally binding arms trade treaty covering the international trade in conventional weapons.

It is a matter of great concern that, during the 2007 session of the Disarmament Commission, the proceedings of Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, resulted in yet another deadlock, thereby moving the Working Group further away from finding common ground, which had been the objective of the whole exercise. It is also disconcerting to note the attempts to put more emphasis on non-proliferation and to pay less attention to nuclear disarmament. However, we are heartened that Working Group II, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, did better by reducing to a great extent the degree of divergence among various delegations on difficult issues. That led to a fairly acceptable fifth version of the text, which is expected to provide a good basis for further discussion this year. We urge Member States to exercise the utmost flexibility in achieving agreements on the recommendations based on the two agenda items of the current cycle to which I have referred.

Achieving tangible outcomes in this year's session of the Disarmament Commission is critically important, as that will provide impetus for the upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference in Geneva. We must remember that the current deadlock in the disarmament machinery is not due to a lack of consensus on technical issues; rather it hinges on political matters. We therefore need stronger political will and more innovative thinking to move things forward. Bangladesh stands ready to cooperate fully in that regard.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate country Croatia, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Montenegro, and Ukraine and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

As this is the first time that I take the floor, please allow me to extend to you my congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I likewise wish to congratulate all members of the Bureau. The EU looks forward to working closely under your able guidance to achieve a successful outcome to our proceedings. I will revert in more detail to the work that lies ahead of us in that regard as we address the items in the two relevant Working Groups.

The European Union hopes that this year's deliberations will result in constructive discussions and will do its best to promote consensus. Our goal is to agree on recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Our overall recommendation to the Chairs of both Working Groups is to steadfastly keep the objective of consensus in sight.

The EU stresses the need for general and complete disarmament. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control remain indispensable elements of cooperative security between States. There is broad agreement that the security of the international community continues to be challenged, both globally and regionally, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the risk that non-State actors could gain access to those weapons. The existence of potential clandestine military nuclear activities remains of particular concern.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to ensure that all existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements are effectively resourced, implemented and fully complied with. The EU believes that the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), are essential for global peace and security. The NPT provides the essential multilateral norm and the basis for all our endeavours to address the security challenges in the nuclear field. It is based on three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In view of the current proliferation risks, we are convinced that the NPT today is more important than ever. Its authority and integrity must be preserved and strengthened. To that end, the EU will continue to promote all the objectives laid down in the Treaty.

Our conviction, as expressed in the EU's strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is that the multilateral approach to non-proliferation provides the best means of countering the threat to international peace and security resulting from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We regret that the 2005 NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a substantive outcome document to address the most pressing challenges to the Treaty. It is most important that all States parties work together to meet the challenges to the NPT and have an open and inclusive discussion in the run-up to the 2010 Review Conference. The EU will continue to work towards universal accession to the NPT, calling on all States not parties to the NPT to undertake a commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament and to become States parties to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We are committed to continuing to make a constructive contribution to the NPT review process. As a matter of fact, today there is room for some hope, given that the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference was able to initiate the new review process on the basis of an agreed agenda. We hope that the second session of the Preparatory Committee will provide a forum for general and substantial discussion on the current situation and NPT goals, with a view to identifying consensual topics on which progress could be made during the cycle. We trust that the contributions the EU made and other further contributions will play their part in a successful and substantive conclusion to the current review cycle. The EU is engaged in discussions on the basis of its common position adopted prior to the 2005 Review Conference, by which it stands.

In that regard, the EU continues to support the decisions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and it will bear in mind the current situation. We also note that the final report, which includes the programme of work adopted by consensus at the 2005 NPT Review Conference, constitutes a reference for the current review process. In that regard, we recognize that serious proliferation events have occurred since the end of the 2000 Review Conference.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is as essential to nuclear disarmament as it is to non-proliferation. The EU believes that a legally binding prohibition of nuclear-weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, as well as a credible verification regime, are vital. The occurrence of nuclear tests after the opening of the CTBT for signature underlines the need for an early entry into force of the Treaty as soon as possible. The EU warmly welcomes the latest ratifications of the CTBT and urges the few remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay and without conditions. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we urge all States to abide by a moratorium and to refrain from any actions that are contrary to the obligations and provisions of the CTBT.

The EU attaches great importance to the substantial work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization (CTBTO). We will continue to actively support the work of the special representative of the States that have ratified the Treaty in his work to promote universal accession. The CTBTO also has additional and complementary benefits through the potential of the international monitoring system to support the early detection of potential tsunamis. The EU is deeply concerned that the financial stability of the Organization and the collective investment by the international community in the CTBT verification regime are threatened by the failure of some signatory States to meet their commitments. We therefore urge all signatory States to meet their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions. In addition to fulfilling our financial obligations, the EU has extended its support for the CTBTO in areas such as training, capacity-building and enhancing the performance of the global verification system.

The European Union also attaches clear priority to the negotiation without precondition in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a means to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation. It constitutes a priority that is ripe for negotiation. We were encouraged by the substantive debates conducted in the Conference on Disarmament on this issue in 2006 and the progress made last year through the appointment of a coordinator on item 2 of the agenda and the constructive deliberations on a fissile material cut-off treaty that took place during the first part of the session.

The EU appeals to all delegations in the Conference on Disarmament to work towards achieving consensus on a possible programme of work that would enable the Conference to start negotiations on a cut-off treaty as soon as possible. Pending the entry into force of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the European Union calls on all States to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the action of the four nuclear-weapon States that have done this.

The EU supports the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and has welcomed the reduction of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems since the end of the cold war, as well as the important steps taken by two EU member States. We stress the need for an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT, in particular by those countries that possess the largest arsenals. In that context, we recognize the application of the principle of irreversibility to guide all measures in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control, as a contribution to the maintenance and enforcement of international peace, security and stability, taking those conditions into account. We are pursuing efforts to secure transparency as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress in disarmament.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which reduced the United States and Russia's strategic nuclear weapons arsenals to 6,000 accountable warheads, is due to expire in 2009. We note that the United States-Russia Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, which limits each side to no more than 1,700 to 2,200 deployed strategic nuclear warheads, will expire on 31 December 2012. While welcoming the reductions in deployed nuclear warheads and means of delivery that START and the Moscow Treaty have brought about, the European Union stresses the need for more progress in structurally reducing those nuclear arsenals through appropriate follow-on processes. In that regard, the EU was encouraged by the announcement in July 2007 that the United States and the Russian Federation are discussing the development of a post-START arrangement.

The EU also highlights the importance of the implementation of the presidential nuclear initiatives declared by the Presidents of Russia and the United States of America in 1991 and 1992 on unilateral reduction in their stocks of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and it calls on all States with non-strategic nuclear weapons to include them in their general arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to their reduction and elimination.

We welcome the announcement by the United States confirming the full implementation of their part of the commitments in 2003. The EU stresses the importance, from the point of view of nuclear disarmament, of the programmes for the destruction and elimination of nuclear weapons and the elimination of fissile material as part of the G-8 global partnership.

Since security in Europe is linked to security in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the EU places particular importance on non-proliferation and disarmament issues in that region. In that context, the EU reiterates the urgent necessity for the universalization of the NPT and as early an entry into force as possible of the CTBT.

The EU calls on all States in that region to make the Middle East into an effectively verifiable zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in keeping with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

Iran's nuclear programme poses a major challenge to the non-proliferation regime. Iran has for more than 20 years hidden a series of clandestine nuclear activities and is pursuing enrichment and heavy-water-related activities while simultaneously developing a ballistic missile programme. Iran has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) only when pressed, and in a piecemeal fashion. While some progress has been made on the outstanding questions, Iran has refused to implement the additional protocol, to suspend its sensitive activities and to take advantage of offers for negotiation.

By adopting sanctions resolution 1803 (2008) on Iran's nuclear programme under Article 41, Chapter VII, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council for the third time sent Iran a strong message of international resolve. We call upon Iran to fulfil the requirements of the Security Council and the IAEA, including the suspension of its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and work on all heavy-water-related projects.

The EU remains committed to an early negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and it reaffirms its firm commitment to a dual-track approach. We call upon Iran to open the way for negotiations by complying with Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008). We reaffirm our support for the proposals presented to Iran in June 2006 by the Secretary-General and the High Representative of the European Union, which can be further developed. The EU reiterates its recognition of Iran's right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its NPT obligations. A solution to the Iranian nuclear issue would significantly contribute to global non-proliferation efforts and to the achievement of the objective of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including their means of delivery.

The EU continues to attach great importance to nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned, as elaborated in the guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission during its 1999 substantive session. Nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance regional and global peace and security and are a means to promote nuclear disarmament, stability and confidence. We welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones following the completion of the necessary consultations. We hope that outstanding issues concerning nuclear-weapon-free zones can be resolved through full consultations in accordance with the Disarmament Commission's guidelines and with the agreement of all parties involved.

The European Union pays particular attention to the need to enhance the detectability of violations, as a means to reinforce compliance with obligations established by the multilateral treaty regime. To that end, particular emphasis is placed on making best use of existing verification mechanisms and, where necessary, establishing additional verification instruments. The EU supports strengthening the role of the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security.

The EU would like to highlight the IAEA's unique and positive role in verifying States' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation commitments. The EU believes that the international safeguards system of the IAEA is the irreplaceable basis for verification in the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and for the success of that multilateral system. The EU considers that comprehensive safeguards agreements together with additional protocols have a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation, form today's verification standard and constitute the current IAEA verification standard. The EU would therefore like to reiterate its call for universal accession to comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. EU member States are also working towards making the additional protocol a condition for supply for sensitive nuclear exports.

The European Union continues to be committed to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls in order to complement our obligations under the NPT, and to support the strengthening of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The European Union urges the Group and the Zangger Committee to share their experience on export controls with non-members in order to meet the new non-proliferation challenges arising from an increase in global trade in nuclear-related goods.

Among the relevant multilateral instruments, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) plays a crucial role in developing an effective mechanism for the prevention and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of production and delivery to or from States and non-State actors worldwide. We commend the 1540 Committee for engaging in activities in support of the resolution and urge them to continue to step up focused outreach to those regions where implementation of the resolution is most urgent.

We appreciate the positive attitude of Member States as regards the need for comprehensive national implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and encourage States to continue in their national efforts towards implementation in line with the goal contained in resolution 1673 (2006) to achieve compliance this year through the achievement of the implementation of all provisions of resolution 1540 (2004). The EU is ready to continue to provide assistance, in particular in building legal and administrative infrastructure, sharing our experience of implementation, and training respective national authorities.

We should not be distracted from other important tasks on the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda this year. Those tasks are manifold and include a broad range of issues that also relate to conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons. The EU is strongly committed to eradicating the illicit accumulation and trade in small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition. The EU aims to reduce the unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition in areas of conflict or potential conflict. To further its objectives, the EU has adopted a specific strategy to combat the illicit accumulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition. Other specific instruments include a code of conduct on arms exports, a joint action on combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons and a common position requiring member States to introduce national legislation to effectively control brokering activities. We are also determined to contribute to reducing the risk posed by the diversion of small arms and light weapons into the illicit market, in particular through efforts to combat illicit trafficking of such weapons by air, inter alia by increasing cooperation and exchanges of information between States.

The EU was deeply disappointed that the Review Conference on the Programme of Action was unable to agree on an outcome document in 2006. The EU looks forward to a more focused, action-oriented and fruitful third Biennial Meeting of States. We will spare no effort to that end and strongly encourage all Member States to take part in that major event. We commend and fully support the ongoing efforts of the Chair-designate of that meeting towards that end. The EU would like to underline the importance of the national reporting requirement in the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument as a tool to enhance transparency and the identification of implementation challenges.

Global standards on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons are essential in tracking the illicit trade in those weapons. The adoption of the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing was a first important step in the implementation of the Programme of Action in that regard. The EU supports the full implementation and further strengthening in the future of the International Marking and Tracing Instrument, inter alia by making it legally binding. We look forward to the first meeting devoted to its implementation, which will take place next July in the framework of the Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, with a view to the continued process beyond the third Biennial Meeting.

Brokering controls remain a high priority for the EU, as illicit brokering is recognized as being among the main factors fuelling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons worldwide. We welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/81. We all need to implement the recommendations contained in the report, as well as to continue to consider further steps to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

The fight against the illicit trade in ammunition continues to be another pressing task. Uncontrolled stocks of ammunition contribute to the risks of trafficking and proliferation and to the prolongation and intensification of armed conflicts. Furthermore, insufficiently secured stockpiles in storage depots constitute a threat to security, health and the environment. There is currently a growing awareness of the importance of the ammunition problem. That is reflected in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. In that regard, the EU welcomes the start of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/72, which has already held its first and second sessions of work.

The EU continues to strongly encourage progress to strengthen arms transfer controls in general. The EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports has made an important contribution to that goal by setting up conditions for the responsible transfers of arms by EU member States and associated States. The European Union also continues to attach great importance to the efforts of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies in further strengthening arms-transfer controls.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate the EU's position on the pressing need for an arms trade treaty. Every day and everywhere, people are affected by irresponsible arms transfers. Their negative impact on peace, reconstruction, security, stability, human rights and sustainable development is especially damaging to developing countries, in particular those in Africa. In addition, it diverts scarce resources from vital poverty alleviation and other development work. The EU firmly supports the elaboration of a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. The European Union is convinced that the United Nations is the only appropriate forum for delivering a truly universal instrument.

The EU has noted that there is a strong call from States and civil society for the establishment of a treaty to better regulate the trade in arms. We reiterate our view that the establishment of binding standards consistent with the existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law would be a major contribution to tackling the undesirable and irresponsible proliferation of conventional weapons, which undermines peace, security, development and full respect for human rights. The European Union is committed to playing an active role in that process. We urge other States to actively support the process aimed at an arms trade treaty as well as the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, which held its first session in February in New York.

The use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) by terrorists and non-State actors as a tool for threatening civil aviation demands further attention and sustained and comprehensive action. MANPADS are lethal, easily concealable and inexpensive. In that respect, the EU firmly supports broader efforts in various multilateral forums, focusing in particular on export controls, including the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS and the Group of Eight initiative. The EU supports both initiatives that are in the wider context of the United Nations Programme of Action, as well as initiatives specifically targeting MANPADS-related issues. The EU fully supports intensifying efforts to prevent the illicit transfer of, unauthorized access to and the use of MANPADS, including through the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The EU welcomes the progress achieved in universalizing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Good progress has been made in destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clearing mined areas and assisting victims, although much remains to be accomplished.

Promoting and achieving universal adherence to the Convention remain priorities. Eleven years ago, more than 50 countries produced and sold anti-personnel mines. Since then, a major effort has been made to ban the production and trafficking of these items. Almost 80 per cent of the world's States have now acceded to the Convention. However, that is not yet enough, as important countries remain outside the Convention. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

The EU regrets that the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which is the cornerstone of European security, has been suspended by one of its States parties. We call for the reversal of that unilateral suspension, which risks eroding the integrity of the CFE regime and undermines the cooperative approach to security in the OSCE area. The message that the European Union delivered last year in this body stated very clearly the EU's attachment to the regime developed in Europe for conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, in particular via the OSCE. The CFE Treaty is a central element of that regime. We support the ongoing efforts to overcome the CFE crisis.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) constitutes an integral part of international humanitarian law, and the EU attaches great importance to it. A clear consensus exists on the need to urgently address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, as demonstrated by the decision to establish a Group of Governmental Experts to deal with this matter. The European Union has expressed its commitment to negotiate a legally binding instrument that addresses the humanitarian concerns regarding cluster munitions in all their aspects by the end of 2008. Its aim is to conclude a legally binding instrument that prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and to include provisions on cooperation and assistance. The EU feels encouraged by the fact that the CCW has actually begun to implement its negotiation mandate and has engaged in real negotiations that reinforce the credibility of the CCW.

Negotiations on cluster munitions are also ongoing, within the framework of the so-called Oslo process. The EU considers that the work on cluster munitions carried out within the framework of the CCW and the Oslo process is complementary and mutually reinforcing and that each forum can benefit from work done in the other, by taking advantage of, inter alia, the military and technical expertise of the CCW.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to express to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full cooperation to ensure the success of our work. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Carlos Duarte of Brazil, for their efforts during the previous session. In addition, I cannot fail to welcome the presence of Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned Countries, by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

During the past two sessions, the Disarmament Commission was not able to produce substantive results on the two items that it had decided upon at the beginning of the three-year cycle 2006-2008. That failure worsened an atmosphere already affected by the stalemate of the multilateral disarmament effort and heightened legitimate concerns over the emergence of new threats, which have never been so pressing or so worrisome for the international community as a whole.

This year, the Disarmament Commission is called upon to complete the third and last stage of the three-year cycle 2006-2008 and to begin a critical phase in its work. Another failure would once again impair the functioning of the multilateral disarmament mechanism and would be fraught with consequences on the eve of an event as important as the preparation of the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In such a context, the preservation of international peace and security is, more than ever before, a joint challenge that we must address if we are to create together the necessary conditions for the profound changes in attitudes that will enable us to establish the collective security system to which we aspire. That requires dedication to promoting the rule of law and rehabilitation of the multilateral negotiation and cooperation framework.

We also hope to see a renewed effort on the part of all parties present here, so that this important United Nations organ can resume its role and substantive debate can finally be revived in an area that is extremely important for international peace and security. Recourse to the virtues of negotiation and dialogue must be continued in order to achieve disarmament and to promote an era of collective peace and security. This desire is within our reach although it will require political determination by States and a joint approach to the debate on the question of disarmament in all its dimensions.

In this connection, I would remind the Commission that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries expressed the political determination and displayed the necessary flexibility to reach consensus on the items in the agenda at the beginning of this working cycle of the Commission. The working document that NAM presented bears witness to its determination to strive for the strengthening of international peace and security and constitutes a balanced platform from which to achieve tangible results by the end of our Commission's work.

It is in this constructive spirit of dialogue and agreement that my delegation would like to reiterate its availability to contribute to the success of the Commission's work and to reach consensus on the two items on its agenda. Comments made during the past two sessions on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons bear witness to the precariousness of the hopes nourished by the climate of détente at the end of the cold war and the important joint decisions taken at the NPT review conferences in 1995 and 2000. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the nuclear disarmament objectives recover their full meaning and relevance. Their implementation must be part of a process firmly based on strict respect for the principles contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the priorities it established, with nuclear disarmament foremost among them.

Reaching those objectives depends inevitably on the universality of the NPT, the implementation of the undertakings of the nuclear States during the sixth NPT Review Conference and a definitive break with the order based on the doctrine of military deterrence and supremacy. It must be actively undertaken through the revitalization of the Disarmament Conference, the only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiation that can draw up a work programme allowing for negotiations on the elaboration of legally binding instruments on nuclear disarmament and guarantees of non-use of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, it is immensely important that we remember that the NPT is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime in its horizontal and vertical dimensions. Respect for, and strict and non-selective implementation of, the commitments assumed must go hand in hand with joint international efforts aimed at promoting technological cooperation and scientific exchanges that will enable all States to have access to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

With regard to the second item, we would like to reiterate our readiness to work for a consensus on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We believe that it will be possible to attain such an objective by the end of the Commission's work, taking into account the concerns of all delegations. It would be useful to underscore, however, that such measures, intended to create conditions for peaceful coexistence and to improve international relations based on solidarity and cooperation, would be greatly strengthened by the reaffirmation of respect for the universal principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, any approach to confidence-building must be global in nature in order to reinforce peace and security. It must favour weapons limitations and contribute to disarmament in both conventional and nuclear weapons.

Lastly, to conclude I would like to reiterate the hope that the Disarmament Commission, which has shown proof of its effectiveness in the past, will continue to serve as the framework for productive and fruitful exchanges.

Mr. Sen (India): Please accept, Sir, our congratulations on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission. We will extend all possible support to you and the other members of the Bureau in the discharge of your responsibilities. We would also like to place on record our appreciation for the efforts of the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups. We value the statement made by the Secretary-General in the Commission yesterday. We thank the High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his contribution to our common endeavours.

India broadly associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. It attaches high importance to the Disarmament Commission, which is the deliberative arm of the three disarmament bodies established by consensus at the tenth special session of the General Assembly. As the universal deliberative forum, it provides for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues for submission of recommendations for the General Assembly.

We cannot overemphasize the role of this body at a time when the international disarmament agenda is under severe strain. The Disarmament Commission offers a unique opportunity for Member States to bridge differences and achieve common approaches of a universal character.

We feel that this body can play a central role in bringing back coherence and consensus to address the security challenges of our time. Member States should resist the temptation to transplant in the Commission frameworks and parameters that may be relevant elsewhere. The deliberations of the Commission will yield positive and substantive results if Member States are willing to use this body to draw up universal guidelines and recommendations conveying a forward-looking vision for a more secure world.

With regard to Working Group I, on recommendations for achieving the objective of universal nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, India has made detailed and substantive interventions at previous sessions of the Commission, including the working paper that was submitted on 9 April of last year. India joins the Non-Aligned Movement in reaffirming that achieving nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority of the international community, as underlined by the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its landmark advisory opinion of 1996, pointed out that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. The United Nations Millennium Declaration underlined the need to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Successive Non-Aligned summits have underlined the importance of nuclear disarmament.

This year we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, which provided a holistic framework for seeking negotiations for a time-bound commitment for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons to usher in a world free of nuclear weapons rooted in non-violence. This action plan remains by far the most comprehensive initiative on nuclear disarmament. India has co-sponsored resolutions that have been adopted by significant majorities in the General Assembly on a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear danger. We have also co-sponsored a resolution adopted by consensus by the General Assembly on measures to prevent terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

The Disarmament Commission must send a strong signal of the international community's resolve to initiate concrete steps towards achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Member States should use this forum to intensify dialogue so as to build consensus that strengthens the ability of the international community to initiate concrete steps towards achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament based on the following elements: reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, taking into account the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, and de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent the unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons.

Further elements would include the negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, the negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame.

We draw satisfaction from the fact that a large measure of common ground already exists with regard to issues discussed in Working Group II, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Deliberations at the Disarmament Commission between 2001 and 2003, although inconclusive, were also useful. India supports practical confidence-building measures initiatives — unilateral, bilateral, regional or global. We believe that such measures can promote a stable environment of peace and security among States by building trust and confidence and enhancing transparency to minimize misunderstandings. Guided by that principle, India has initiated several confidence-building measures with countries in our neighbourhood, including with China and Pakistan.

The implementation of appropriate types of confidence-building measures in specific regions should take into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in the region. Such arrangements have to be freely agreed upon by the States of the region concerned while taking into account the specific conditions and characteristics of the region. A step-by-step approach should be adopted. A prescriptive approach that negates the sovereign right of States to choose the confidence-building measures best suited to their interests should be avoided. We believe that focus on extraneous political issues will only erode the large measure of agreement that already exists in the Working Group and also dilute and weaken the practical confidence-building measures that we hope to adopt during this session.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Let me also congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your assumption of your duties. I assure you of my delegation's full support for your work.

Let me also say that Austria of course associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would like to make two additional points.

Austria has been, and continues to be, a long-standing supporter of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in both the conventional and non-conventional realms. A whole generation has now lived under the threat of weapons that can cause mass annihilation. Is that threat something worth passing on to the next generation? We fully share the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction — a world free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We need verifiable and irreversible disarmament of the nuclear arsenal, global adherence to the comprehensive nuclear-test ban and a comprehensive cut-off of weapons-grade fissile material.

More and more international politicians from nuclear-weapon States now believe, and have shared publicly their understanding, that nuclear weapons no longer serve as an effective legitimate deterrent but could become the ultimate source of global destruction. Austria welcomes those statements and hopes that those voices are heard.

For our part, we have tried to contribute as best we can during the past decade. Last year, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik proposed some new ideas for the long-standing debate on the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle. In our view, the dangers associated with the increasing access to nuclear technology cannot be ignored for the sake of short-sighted focus on national economic interests, fears of limitation of State sovereignty or loss of control over a key technology sector. The time has come for new thinking in the light of new dramatic challenges.

As the Commission is aware, Austria believes that, because of the security and environmental risks, nuclear technology is no clean and safe energy source. Already in 1999, the Austrian Parliament passed a constitutional law banning the production of nuclear energy on its territory. We firmly believe in the need to develop alternative sustainable and safe forms of clean energy. We acknowledge, however, that other States will resort to nuclear energy to partially cover their energy needs and that, in view of vastly expanding needs, the use of nuclear energy, like the use of other energy sources, will rise in the coming years. More use of nuclear energy means more risk of misuse of that technology. It is time to design a framework suited to the nuclear realities of the twenty-first century and to restrict enrichment and reprocessing exclusively to facilities under multilateral control. Those limitations would need to be accompanied by rules of transparency and by an assurance that legitimate users could get supplies.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the idea of establishing such a new framework. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and several States have proposed a variety of interesting approaches, some focusing on the establishment of facilities under international control and others on guarantee mechanisms to assure the supply of nuclear fuel. We believe an initial step could be to entrust the IAEA to serve as a virtual broker for all transactions in the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. Every buyer — even one that is next door to the seller — must buy fuel through the IAEA. That would provide immediate shared transparency about who buys what. That should contribute to building trust and confidence. Gradually, transparency would be supplemented with IAEA control rights over sensitive technology, enrichment and reprocessing. In the long term, increasing those control rights should transform all enrichment and reprocessing facilities from national to essentially multilateral operations under the auspices of the IAEA. It goes without saying that any new facilities would, right from the beginning, be multilateral IAEA-controlled operations.

The concern has been raised as regards our idea that, by ceding control, the companies operating facilities would be de facto nationalized and the huge investments made in the technology would be lost. That is not true. The companies would continue to run the facilities and they would continue to reap the profits. The IAEA would simply take on the tasks, currently discharged by States or regional organizations, of monitoring operations and ensuring that buyers fulfil non-proliferation requirements. But through the IAEA we would be doing the monitoring and verification together.

There might be concern that multilateralization could undermine developing countries' access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — which is, after all, a right enshrined in article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); but that concern is also not warranted. All States would fully maintain their NPT rights; but having a right would also give the owner the possibility to decide to use it exclusively together with other States or through an international organization. By entrusting the IAEA to control and monitor facilities, we are in fact making joint use of our right and benefiting from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology together in a fair and equal manner.

It is important to understand that the Austrian proposal precisely tries to counter the oft-derided division into haves and have-nots vis-à-vis nuclear technology. The confidence crisis about the use of civilian nuclear technology can only be overcome by establishing an international system that is fair and treats all States equally. That goal can be achieved by an arrangement whereby all States agree not to operate enrichment and reprocessing facilities individually and to transform all existing facilities into multilateral ones under the supervision of the IAEA.

Considerable advantages — in safety, security, non-proliferation and cost — could accrue. A joint facility places all participants under a greater degree of scrutiny. A breakout by the host would be more difficult than in the case of a nationally controlled entity. Most of all, new facilities would only have to be built for economic reasons, not for reasons of strategic politics or national pride. As a consequence, there would be fewer facilities — just as many as the market requires. Having fewer sites to watch means, in turn, that the IAEA is in a position to monitor more carefully, given that it has limited resources.

Austria is well aware that that is an ambitious proposal, but if we are truly at the beginning of a renaissance of nuclear energy, as many experts tell us, we have to act now. Let us not forget that, as ambitious as the proposal may seem, it is not new. It has, on a regional level, been done before. We would in fact be reinvesting in the successful ideas that lie at the root of European integration. Over 50 years ago, the founding members of today's European Union placed potentially dangerous substances and technologies — coal, steel and nuclear technology — under the control of joint multilateral institutions. It seems appropriate to take up those ideas now and to promote the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle.

It must be stressed, of course, that those multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle remain complementary to the primary non-proliferation instruments — effective and universal implementation of IAEA safeguards, including the Additional Protocol, and effective export controls — as well as to vital disarmament and non-proliferation instruments like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the fissile material cut-off treaty.

I should now like to say a word about the CTBT. The entry into force of the Treaty is long overdue. Last year, Austria, together with Costa Rica, assumed the presidency of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of CTBT. In that capacity, we continue to raise awareness about the Treaty and the scientific civil applications of its international monitoring system, such as the tsunami early warning system. We hope that a better understanding of the overall benefits of the CTBT will help to speed up national ratification processes and the Treaty's entry into force. To that end, Austria has sponsored several CTBT workshops, such as for the Caribbean States and the Pacific States. Recent positive developments such as the ratifications by Barbados, Colombia and Malaysia indicate that there is currently a positive dynamic. We call on all States that have not done so yet to sign and ratify the CTBT.

The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction rises exponentially with the development of advanced delivery systems. Until we are successful in establishing a multilateral missile control regime within the United Nations, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation of 2002 serves as the only normative international instrument for verification against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Austria serves as the Executive Secretariat of the Code, and we have hosted six meetings of subscribing States. More than two thirds of Member States have subscribed to the Code, as called for, inter alia, in General Assembly resolution 60/62. I hope that more will join. It is paramount, however, that participating States demonstrate their commitment and contribute positively to all aspects of this confidence-building instrument. I especially call on the United States and Russia to demonstrate leadership in this regard.

Let me now turn briefly to conventional weapons. Austria, together with other countries, is striving to conclude, by the end of this year, a legally binding instrument to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. A ban on cluster munitions furthers the cause of disarmament, strengthens humanitarian principles and will contribute substantially to saving the lives, limbs and livelihoods of many civilians.

To raise awareness about the grave problems regarding cluster munitions, Austria organized the Vienna Conference on Cluster Munitions in December 2007, in which 138 States participated. The Conference — together with other such meetings in Oslo, Lima, Belgrade, Costa Rica, Wellington and Livingstone, and the conferences planned in the next weeks in Mexico City and Bangkok — served as preparation for a diplomatic conference in Dublin that will start on 19 May. We encourage all countries to actively participate at that conference to achieve a robust convention on cluster munitions, which will make a real difference in preventing future harm to civilians.

But as regards cluster munitions, it is not only Austrian diplomats who have been busy. Late last year, the Austrian parliament adopted a national law that foresees a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions. It prohibits the development, production, supply, sale, procurement, import, export, transit, use and possession of cluster munitions and provides for the destruction of national stockpiles by January 2011. The Austrian law contains no exceptions for so-called smart cluster bombs or exceptions for weapons with a low number of sub-munitions. When all stocks have been destroyed in three years, Austria will in fact be free of cluster munitions. That is disarmament in concrete terms, which we believe is best suited to building confidence among States.

The Austrian engagement to ban cluster munitions has its roots in another area at the intersection of disarmament and humanitarian policies, namely, the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Since its adoption, Austria has fully supported the Mine Ban Treaty. It served as President of the first Review Conference of the Convention in 2004, and in 2007 we acted as co-chair of the Treaty's committee for victim assistance. Austria continues to support the mine-ban process to achieve universal adherence, improve international cooperation, improve assistance for victims, support the clearance of mine-affected areas and assist States in their efforts to eliminate land mines.

Let me conclude with an issue that must not go unmentioned in the context of this debate. Both together with our EU partners and individually, Austria strives to constructively support the fight against the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The availability of and easy access to small arms have terrible consequences — crime, terrorism, destabilization of State structures and societies and national and international conflict. As a result, we also encounter human rights violations and long-term displacement and poverty. Small arms contribute to undermining the attempts of millions of people to enjoy development opportunities in peace and security.

What have we done? Austria directly supports the destruction of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons and ammunition in several countries. In Africa, the continent most heavily affected by the uncontrolled spread of small arms, we support the strengthening of national legal regimes, capacity-building and practical disarmament measures through financing or supporting several individual projects. Those projects are implemented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and are designed to benefit the Member States directly concerned. Those are long-term projects to which Austria will remain committed for many years to come.

Over the past years, we have often resorted to pointing at others and giving good advice about what others should do. That will lead us nowhere. We will have to make individual efforts so that we can all be successful together. I have tried to outline what Austria — a small, neutral country — is doing. Of course, we will try to do more. I hope that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission will be in a constructive effort by all of us for real disarmament. I hope we have a productive session.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for this year. I wish you every success in your difficult task, which you are quite capable of discharging. Through you, I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of the Sudan's full support in producing a final text at this session.

We are meeting today in the Disarmament Commission to deliberate on the priorities of disarmament and to discuss ways of effectively implementing the relevant conventions and protocols.

The Commission and other relevant disarmament machinery have experienced a series of failures. That is certainly not due to a lack of legal instruments, for there are sufficient international conventions addressing all aspects of disarmament. Those failures are due to the lack of implementation stemming from the absence of political will: nuclear States with sophisticated arsenals are not prepared to dismantle them or to place them under the full-scope safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That leads to an imbalance of power in the world and the ongoing race to carry out nuclear tests and to produce a new generation of weapons of mass destruction, on the pretext of pre-emptive deterrence and strengthening national security.

Moreover, the majority of States Members of the Organization continue to emphasize the need to operationalize multilateral disarmament channels and to implement conventions without selectivity and discrimination. That would lead to a safer world in which human endeavours are grounded in development and reconstruction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, rather than on a competition for arsenals of death and destruction.

Also of concern are the numerous conflicts, wars and hotbeds of tension throughout the world, entailing rising expenditures to strengthen State military power. In that connection, we would like to reiterate that nuclear-weapon States should take urgent and serious steps to reduce expenditures on weapons programmes in preparation for a phased dismantling of their nuclear arsenals. We also support efforts to conclude binding international agreements that would offer non-nuclear-weapon States guarantees that they would not be threatened by nuclear-weapon States, without any selectivity or discrimination and without prejudice to the right of all States to benefit from the peaceful and scientific use of nuclear technology in the interests of humankind.

The delegation of the Sudan would also like to reiterate the need to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. That is one of the foundations of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and is a prerequisite for the success of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Thanks to regional and unilateral initiatives, some progress has been made in that regard. Treaties on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones cover almost half of the world. In that connection, I would in particular like to refer to the pioneering Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Tlatelolco and Bangkok Treaties and the Mongolia initiative.

However, it is regrettable that a single nuclear-weapon State has been a stumbling block to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That country is Israel, which is the only country in the region that refuses to accede to the NPT. At a time when we are beginning the preparatory work for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in order to avoid a repetition of the 2005 Review Conference, we would like to emphasize the need for genuine resolve to implement previously adopted resolutions, in particular the one on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review Conference.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons currently poses a direct threat to most developing countries represented in the Organization. The true danger of those weapons lies in their easy use and access by non-State actors. That includes the possibility that they may fall into the hands of terrorists, especially given that restrictions are imposed only on receiving countries. Members are all aware of the role that such weapons play in igniting conflicts and civil wars.

As the Commission is aware, the Sudan has been an active participant in all regional and international forums to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The next biennial Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons will be held in July, and we emphasize the need for the implementation of part II of the Programme and for offering affected countries necessary technical assistance, especially in the fields of monitoring, tracking and stockpiling, and in terms of confidence-building measures and cooperation with regional offices in various countries.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan looks forward to the success of the Commission's deliberations at this session. To that end, we will participate in Working Group II with a view to achieving the desired results from the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Mr. Al-Hayen (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure, in the name of the State of Kuwait, to convey to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. We are confident that your well-known experience and wisdom will contribute to the success of our work this year. I should like also to assure you of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you in order to contribute to the success of the tasks before you. I would similarly like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as the statement made by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Arab Group.

The State of Kuwait believes in the central role of the United Nations in addressing the main challenges facing the international community, foremost among which is ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The way to address that and other relevant issues has been specified clearly in numerous previously agreed conventions, agreements, resolutions and work programmes. What is now required from members is their commitment to their obligations and their cooperation and coordination in implementing the requirements through the existing mechanisms or to work for the improvement of those mechanisms to achieve greater effectiveness in the implementation process.

While the international community recognizes the threat that nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction pose to international peace and security, the progress needed to eliminate those dangers has not been achieved because of a lack of political will on the part of some to comply with the relevant international agreements and conventions. That confirms the importance of pursuing our efforts and endeavours and of taking the confidence-building measures necessary to achieve the desired goal of a world free of those destructive weapons, and one where peace and security prevail.

Believing in the importance of nuclear safety, my delegation urges all States that have yet to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to do so. We also encourage States that have done so, but have not yet signed the Additional Protocol, to do so as well. We hope that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will comply with their obligations under its provisions and their safeguards agreement, and will work closely with the IAEA to resolve any doubts and questions concerning their nuclear programmes through negotiation and constructive dialogue.

In that context, we demand that Israel — the only country in the Middle East that is not party to the non-proliferation Treaty and that possesses nuclear weapons, in defiance of the decisions of international law and repeated international calls to accede immediately to the Treaty — dismantle its nuclear arsenal and subject all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. Israel's situation is a clear disruption of the balance of power and is of ongoing concern in the Middle East.

The State of Kuwait calls on the international community to halt sales of scientific and technological means that contribute to further strengthening Israel's nuclear arms capabilities, or to any other country seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction programmes. In that respect, we also wish to confirm the right of all States of the region to acquire the technology and know-how necessary for the peaceful use of nuclear energy within the scope of the relevant international conventions.

The State of Kuwait also wishes to praise the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 1997 concerning the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to resolve conflicts. We support effective international arrangements that would guarantee non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The State of Kuwait asserts that the time has come for important high-level political decisions to be taken to implement the internationally agreed arrangements to free our world of weapons of mass destruction. On that basis, we renew our call to the nuclear-weapon States to take the necessary measures to eliminate them, since nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament go hand in hand and one cannot be achieved without the other.

The State of Kuwait wishes to confirm its total commitment to the demands of the international community relating to non-proliferation and disarmament. As the regrettable series of failures in disarmament continues, we see that it is of crucial importance that the provisions of the NPT be implemented in a comprehensive and non-selective manner, particularly article VI on nuclear disarmament and article IV on facilitating peaceful applications of nuclear technology. We also stress the need to adhere to the principles contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the results of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, and the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, particularly the 13 practical steps contained in the document.

The State of Kuwait confirms its support for the text of the final communiqué of the fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which calls upon Member States that have not ratified the Treaty — and especially those whose ratification is required for its entry into force — to do so.

The State of Kuwait has submitted its national report to the General Assembly, in which it has set forth the measures taken to guarantee its compliance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which seeks to prevent weapons of mass destruction and materials used in manufacturing them from falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

With respect to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the State of Kuwait welcomed the General Assembly's adoption in December 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Although the United Nations Conference to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons did not achieve the desired objective, it succeeded in shedding light on one important issue.

Finally, we hope that the consultations will be transparent and comprehensive and will fulfil our aspirations to international peace and security.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, most warmly on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. This year's session, under your chairmanship, is extremely important because we must conclude the discussions of the current three-year cycle and reach consensus on recommendations on substantive matters. I can assure you of the full support of Japan in your endeavours. Furthermore, we would like to commend the immense efforts made by the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

The Disarmament Commission can look back at an impressive record of achievements. In 1992, the Commission issued guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters. In 1993, it reached agreement on guidelines for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and then, in 1996, for international arms transfers. Moreover, in 1999, consensus was achieved on two sets of guidelines concerning the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control.

In recent years, however, we have seen little outcome from the Disarmament Commission. In 2003, we were unable to reach agreement in the fields of both nuclear disarmament and conventional weapons. We must make the necessary efforts to break through the current situation. With each country demonstrating utmost flexibility, we strongly hope that the Commission will be able to successfully adopt recommendations.

As the only country that has suffered the devastation of atomic bombs, Japan seeks a peaceful world free from nuclear weapons to create a better international security environment. To that end, it is vital for the whole world to share a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons by overcoming the differences in position of the nuclear-weapon and the non-nuclear-weapon States. With such a vision, our annual General Assembly resolution, entitled "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons", has been consistently adopted by an overwhelming majority. The resolution demonstrates Japan's strong belief that we should build upon practical and concrete measures for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Taking that into account, Japan appreciates that there has recently been a surge in debate on practical measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

For step-by-step progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, maintaining and strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime is of critical importance. However, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the regime, is facing a grave challenge, among others, from the danger of NPT non-nuclear-weapon States' covertly developing nuclear weapons under the cover of the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In that context, I must highlight the importance of the international community collectively tackling the challenges facing the NPT regime. At the same time, I must also highlight the importance of ensuring the complete universality of the NPT. For the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, Japan greatly hopes that further meaningful and substantive discussions will be conducted at the second session of the Preparatory Committee. Those discussions should be based on the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, chaired by Ambassador Amano of Japan.

For the purpose of enhancing the credibility of the NPT, it is also important for all the nuclear-weapon States to faithfully implement their article VI nuclear disarmament obligations. In that connection, while welcoming the nuclear disarmament efforts of the United States and the Russian Federation, including the significant reduction in the United States nuclear weapons stockpile, Japan hopes for an early agreement on a successor framework for the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. We also welcome the recent unilateral nuclear disarmament measures announced by the United Kingdom and France. Japan seeks greater transparency from all the nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament efforts, and in that regard we appreciate the detailed presentations given by some nuclear-weapon States. Additionally, we call on all nuclear-weapon States to make further irreversible and verifiable reductions.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is also imperative. It was heartening, therefore, that with the recent ratification of Colombia, the number of annex II States that have yet to ratify has now fallen into the single digits. Japan will continue to call for the ratification of the CTBT by all States and expects that the moratorium on nuclear test explosions will be maintained pending the Treaty's entry into force.

The Conference on Disarmament is the international community's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Nonetheless, the Conference has been deadlocked for over a decade. That is an extremely regrettable situation. In recent years, the Conference has conducted important substantive discussions, in particular on the four core issues, and a proposal tabled by the six presidents of 2008 is now under consideration. Japan calls on all the Conference on Disarmament members to reach agreement on a programme of work and commence negotiations on a disarmament treaty.

Now let me turn our attention to each of the Conference's four core issues. First, concerning nuclear disarmament, I would like to emphasize the necessity for all the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their strong commitment to article VI on nuclear disarmament.

In relation to the important nuclear disarmament measure of a fissile material cut-off treaty, which will set a quantitative cap on nuclear weapons, it became even more apparent in the Conference on Disarmament's deliberations of 2006 and 2007 that conditions were sufficiently ripe for a commencement of negotiations. Japan strongly appeals to all member States to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay. Furthermore, we urge all the nuclear-weapon States and non-NPT States parties to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices pending the entry into force of a treaty.

In relation to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, Japan is ready to examine and discuss all the various issues surrounding the issue, including the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. Additionally, Japan in principle supports the idea of negative security assurances and will actively contribute to further discussions.

As one approach among the many and diverse views necessary for tackling conventional weapons, which actually cause the most destruction on a day-to-day basis, I must mention the necessity of building confidence among States. From that perspective, Japan is extremely pleased that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is based on the 1991 General Assembly resolution on transparency in armaments, has become established as one of the most important international systems for promoting confidence-building among States. More than 15 years after the establishment of that system, I still cannot emphasize strongly enough the danger of expansion in armaments through distrust among States, as well as the importance of preventing that danger.

Japan believes that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the most important international framework for tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and that confidence-building among States contributes to the eradication of the illicit trade. At the 2006 meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, a voluntary registration form for small arms and light weapons was created, and it is expected that efforts related to the Arms Register and the Programme of Action will have a synergistic effect in the future.

Furthermore, taking into consideration that 500,000 people fall victim to small arms every year, the implementation of the Programme of Action must be strengthened continually. From that perspective, in March last year Japan held the Tokyo Workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which participants shared best practices related to efforts on small arms and light weapons and discussed transfer controls, among other issues. Additionally, Japan, in cooperation with Colombia and South Africa, submits annually a resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", and promotes the strengthening of efforts on small arms in United Nations forums. Japan will be actively working towards the success of the Biennial Meeting of States, which will be held this July based on last year's resolution.

An arms trade treaty is intimately related to building confidence in the field of conventional weapons, since it aims to guarantee the responsible transfer of arms and will create a common standard for such transfers. This year, meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on an arms trade treaty have been held. Japan is participating in its deliberations and making proactive contributions to enable meaningful discussion. As a matter of principle, Japan does not export weapons and has maintained that policy for more than 60 years. We sincerely hope for a more peaceful world, and it is in that spirit that we intend to vigorously contribute to the discussions on an arms trade treaty.

This year, Japan holds the presidency of the G-8 and will be hosting the G-8 summit meeting in Toyako, Hokkaido, in July. The G-8 Hokkaido Toyako summit will raise as one of its main themes the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Japan envisions a strong G-8 message towards strengthening the international non-proliferation regime.

Additionally, Japan will be hosting the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development this year. As peace is a basic prerequisite for development, Japan has consistently focused on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries.

Strengthening our efforts on disarmament is critical for peace consolidation. Moreover, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, by freeing up resources that would have been diverted to armaments, those resources can then be used for economic development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Japan is energetically cooperating for the maintenance, rehabilitation and building of global peace and aims to be a peace-fostering nation.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker in the general exchange of views for this morning. The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Semin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation has decided to exercise its right of reply with respect to the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, its references to the situation with regard to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Unfortunately, I do not have a written version of the statement made by the representative of Slovenia, but as far as I remember, that representative said that the Russian Federation, despite what had been said at the previous session of the Disarmament

Commission, had taken a step that was not in line with what it had stated with respect to this Treaty. We would like to give an explanation.

In the context of the current situation with respect to the CFE Treaty, the suspension of fulfilment of the Russian Federation's obligations under the Treaty was a logically justified step. We gave notice of our intention to take this step, including at the previous session of the Disarmament Commission. The CFE Treaty, in its current form, is outmoded and no longer valid. It runs counter to the security interests of the Russian Federation, a fact about which we have long informed our partners.

But with the suspension of our participation in the CFE Treaty, we are not closing the door on further negotiations. We expect that our Treaty partners will show readiness to restore the viability of the regime for controlling conventional forces in Europe on the basis of the adapted CFE Treaty. The Russian Federation made concrete proposals on that subject at the Extraordinary Conference of States Parties to the CFE Treaty in 2007. They remain relevant and are still on the table for negotiation.

To achieve this goal, we are taking targeted steps. Specifically, we are aiming at regular negotiations with our Treaty partners, in particular the United States of America. We are already looking at various possibilities for bringing participants in the process closer together.

On many issues, however, there is still considerable work to be done. Unfortunately, our Western partners frequently, having taken a step forward, for some reason take two steps backwards. On the whole, we have the impression that they are the ones expecting specific decisions from us now, particularly on reversing our decision to suspend our participation in the Treaty, before our partners would be prepared to discuss our concerns — and only after the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty and without any guarantees in terms of results. It is unlikely that such an approach would be acceptable and in line with the concept of parallel actions.

The Russian Federation is in favour of rapidly resolving the problem regarding the Treaty, but what is important to us is the quality of the agreement. Only after resolving all the problems that we have pointed out will we be able to breathe new life into the Treaty regime. I would like to add that professional and detailed discussion on the Treaty is continuing in specific forums, and we wonder whether the Disarmament Commission could do anything; it is probably not useful to talk about this here.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations

A/CN.10/PV.287

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

287th meeting

Tuesday, 8 April 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairperson: Mr. de Klerk .... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Pant (Nepal): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. The chairmen of the two working groups also deserve our felicitations and best wishes.

Nepal associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful remarks. I also take this opportunity to put on record our appreciation of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, for his active leadership.

Let me begin by making a few remarks on the theme "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have remained the most profound aspirations of our time. However, the successive failures of disarmament meetings over the past few years to find common ground have brought us to a standstill, with no progress in sight.

The disarmament agenda has not always been fraught with failures. There have been some glorious moments as well. Not too long ago, the permanent extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 was a major achievement, and was followed by the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Those positive developments finally led to the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which was a big success. It not only promulgated the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, but also enjoyed the support of the nuclear-weapon States. The real challenge before us today is therefore to build upon those positive experiences and to regenerate the necessary political will and momentum for the way forward.

Nuclear-weapon States may perceive nuclear weapons as tools of deterrence, but they represent an appalling threat to human civilization. Furthermore, the increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and the palpable danger of such technology, or even of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, compound our apprehension of a nuclear mishap.

Nepal, as a State party to the NPT, strongly believes that the Treaty forms the bedrock of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes, and underlines the need to make it universal. It is our view that the three pillars of nuclear disarmament are equally important and mutually reinforcing, so their sanctity has to be fully preserved. We also believe that the ultimate objective of the international community, as set forth at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, should be geared towards achieving general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

As an urgent step, the initiative to conclude a universal and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear States has become imperative. Quite logically, the onus lies with the nuclear-weapon States to lead by setting an example. It is our principled position that the only certainty against the use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

It is pertinent to underline here that, in the face of the real threats of unbridled proliferation and the misuse of nuclear materials, the need to strengthen the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency has become more pronounced. Similarly, as a corollary to nuclear disarmament, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the conclusion of the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty are indispensable. In the same vein, we strongly oppose the weaponization of outer space and support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including regional initiatives towards that end.

Turning to the second theme, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", my delegation would like to recognize the efforts made at the previous sessions of the Commission that have led to some progress in the work of Working Group II. My delegation feels that confidence-building measures undertaken particularly under the aegis of the United Nations and other multilateral processes would contribute most to fostering an environment of international peace and security. Such measures contribute to promoting transparency and reduce tensions at the global level. They also help to mitigate, among other things, the threats of conventional weapons, particularly in conflict zones all over the world.

Likewise, regional mechanisms could complement efforts at the global level by creating a climate conducive to effective collaboration among regional stakeholders. It is, however, important that confidence-building measures, irrespective of who undertakes and implements them, take into account the specific conditions of the respective countries or regions.

In that respect, Nepal believes that the United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament have meaningful roles to play. Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Office of the High Representative for the progress it has made towards relocating the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu. We look forward to the inauguration of the Regional Centre in Kathmandu in July this year. I would like to take this opportunity to affirm, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, our full cooperation during the relocation and in the conduct of the Centre's activities. We are confident that the Centre will be able to function effectively, including in the area of confidence-building in the region, reinvigorating the Kathmandu process. We sincerely appreciate the generous cooperation of the international community in ensuring the resources required by the Centre to carry out substantive works, as per its mandates. In that regard, I wish to inform the Commission that the Government of Nepal is committed to providing the operational costs of the Centre.

Progress on disarmament matters will continue eluding us as long as we hold on to our entrenched positions without accommodating broader mutual interests. It is therefore high time that the international community broke free of its inhibition to engage in genuine efforts to promote the disarmament agenda, particularly that of nuclear disarmament. To move forward, it is essential to discard the misleading notion of fragmented security and to work concertedly towards consolidating collective security.

In conclusion, the disarmament agenda requires political wisdom on the part of its main players. It is absolutely necessary to commit ourselves to making this session a success, paving the way for a constructive engagement during the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva. As we approach the end of the three-year cycle at this session, the international community cannot afford to squander yet another opportunity to work with a sense of unity.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session.

Before referring to the agenda items now before us, please allow me to express our view on the present situation of the Korean peninsula and the resolution of the nuclear issue, which have become of major concern worldwide.

An extremely tense situation has recently been in the making on the Korean peninsula due to the reckless acts of anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea and anti-reunification forces at home and abroad. As is well known to the world, the United States-South Korea Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercises were conducted throughout South Korea in early March this year. In light of their scale and nature, those manoeuvres, for which the latest military hardware — including the nuclear-powered ultra-large carrier Nimitz and a nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine — were mobilized, are a nuclear war rehearsal to attack the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by force of arms. Furthermore, most recently, violent remarks concerning a pre-emptive strike at the nuclear base of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were openly made by a high-ranking South Korean military official.

It is regrettable, indeed, that such attempts have been made to set the situation on the Korean peninsula, which had been positive until last year and were moving towards reconciliation and cooperation, back to a phase of confrontation.

A peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations has been the consistent stand of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our ultimate goal in its resolution is to denuclearize the Korean peninsula as a whole. With that goal in mind, we have patiently made every possible effort to implement the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 and its consequent agreements of 13 February and 3 October 2007.

The disabling of the Nyongbyon nuclear facilities is already over 90 per cent complete, and a report on the nuclear declaration was drafted and conveyed to the United States side in November last year. An exceptional measure was also taken on our part to allow the United States experts to see even sensitive military objects and to provide them with samples with a view to clarifying the issue of so-called suspected uranium enrichment raised by the United States. As requested by the United States, we also reconfirmed our commitment not to proliferate nuclear technology when that country was the first to raise the issue of suspected nuclear cooperation. In other words, we have been doing what we are supposed to do, and far beyond our obligations.

The fundamental principle for the resolution of the nuclear issue is the simultaneous action that was agreed upon at the Six-Party Talks. However, the United States has not yet honoured its commitments to remove the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the list of terror sponsors and to terminate the application of The Trading with The Enemy Act.

If the United States is sincere in its attitude to the denuclearized Korean peninsula, it should prove the abandonment of its hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through practical actions, as it has pledged to do, and refrain from setting up obstacles to the resolution of the nuclear issue by antagonizing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with such acts as joint military exercises with South Korea. The South Korean authorities should also behave properly, in conformity with the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, rather than take a confrontational path against my nation. That is the only way to achieve the common prosperity of the Korean nation and to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and beyond.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will remain unchanged in its approach to developing inter-Korean relations and achieving independent reunification, peace and prosperity, in conformity with the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the October 4 declaration.

My delegation is of the view that the current session should be seized as an opportunity to make a tangible contribution to realizing the earnest desire of all humankind for a nuclear-free world. The root cause of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, of so much concern to many countries, is the existence of nuclear weapons and the threat to use them. Therefore, the nuclear-weapon States — particularly the United States, with the largest nuclear arsenal in the world — need to make a due contribution to achieving the objectives of this session by committing themselves to nuclear disarmament towards the eventual total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In continuation of my statement, please allow me to respond to the statement made yesterday by the South Korean representative on the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, just to provide a better understanding to all representatives present here.

The representative of the Republic of Korea said in his statement yesterday that putting reliable confidence-building measures in place between the two

Koreas is essential for the further promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. I doubt whether he had a correct understanding of confidence-building measures before making such remarks. As a matter of fact, there are no confidence-building measures more reliable than the historic 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, announced at the summit between the North and South of Korea in June 2000 and October 2007, respectively.

Those declarations were supported and welcomed by the United Nations membership as well. Ever since the publication of the 15 June Declaration, inter-Korean relations, once confrontational and distrustful, had begun moving towards reconciliation and cooperation. The world's peoples, expressing relief at the possible developments on the Korean peninsula, sincerely hoped for their continuation towards eventual reunification.

But what are the realities today? The present ruling conservative forces of South Korea have disrupted overnight the confidence that had been accumulated with painstaking efforts between the North and South of Korea over the past several years, thus bringing present relations to the brink of collapse.

The South Korean representative also said in his statement that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is the key to security on the peninsula, which in turn will provide the basis of other cooperative projects between the two Koreas. That only reveals his scant knowledge of the root causes of the nuclear issue and the ramifications of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula has come to the fore as the United States has brought nuclear weapons into South Korea, posing a nuclear threat to my country. It is well known that the current United States Administration went so far as to designate my country as part of an axis of evil and a target of pre-emptive nuclear strikes. Under those circumstances, we had no other option but to possess nuclear weapons as a defensive means to safeguard our supreme national interest and security.

The emergence of the political issue on the Korean peninsula is partly the responsibility of the South Korean authorities, who permitted United States nuclear weapons to be brought in and have participated in a series of nuclear-war exercises against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In addition, the first thing done by the present conservative ruling forces of South Korea was allowing the United States to bring its super-large nuclear-powered carrier, its nuclear submarines and its other ultramodern nuclear hardware to South Korea and to stage a nuclear-war exercise against our nation. They are now contemplating participating in the so-called Proliferation Security Initiative military defence system, which even their predecessors had hesitated to do.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is not for half of the peninsula, but for the peninsula as a whole. It is for that reason that the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement resulting from the Six-Party Talks clearly stipulates the respective obligations of the United States and the Republic of Korea, on the basis of the principle of simultaneous action.

All those facts constitute a clear indication that the keys to security on the Korean peninsula are an end to the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and a change in the attitude of the South Korean authorities, who obey outside forces and seek confrontation with my country. Our powerful military deterrent is a guarantee of peace and security on the Korean peninsula and beyond, making it possible for North Korea and South Korea to witness historic events such as the publication of the 15 June and 4 October Declarations and to facilitate cooperation aimed at reconciliation between the two sides. I would be more than happy if this opportunity were seized by the delegation of the Republic of Korea as a chance to better understand the issue of denuclearization and the current situation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): It is always a pleasure to come back to the Disarmament Commission. I had the privilege and honour of chairing the Commission in 1997 in a much better political climate, which enabled us to reach a good agreement. Perhaps that was the only agreement that has been reached during the work of the Commission to date. In 1997, as compared with what is happening now, approximately 40 to 50 ambassadors came from Geneva to the Disarmament Commission to discuss what we were going to do about weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons. I hope that the spirit that prevailed in the past will soon be revived and that we will witness another success, under your able guidance, Mr. Chairman, and that of the rest of the Bureau.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The delegation of Egypt is pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at the present session and also congratulates the other members of the Bureau. We trust that your wisdom and your recognized expertise will lead the present session to a successful outcome. The delegation of Egypt reaffirms its full cooperation with you, with the other members of the Bureau and with all other delegations, as well as with the High Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Duarte, and the Steering Group on Disarmament and Development, to attain that objective.

The delegation of Egypt associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The international community continues to witness an increasing number of challenges to international security and regional stability and to the credibility of existing international treaties and conventions. Egypt views the existing regional and international disarmament and non-proliferation environment with concern, particularly as it relates to the international community's respect for its traditional priorities as embodied in international conventions, United Nations resolutions and decisions taken in other, related international forums.

Although the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified the goal of nuclear disarmament as the key priority for international disarmament and arms control efforts, the world continues to witness setbacks in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and in attaining the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

In the area of nuclear disarmament, the multilateral efforts of the five nuclear-weapon States remain extremely limited, especially as compared with the commitments undertaken by those States under the Treaty. With regard to non-proliferation, we continue to witness efforts to place priority on non-proliferation in the absence of parallel progress in the area of nuclear disarmament, on the basis of an imagined linkage between non-proliferation and limiting the inalienable right of non-nuclear-weapon States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. That poses a challenge to the principles of the NPT and the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear verification.

Although the NPT's indefinite extension in 1995 came in the context of a package agreement including the resolution on the Middle East, which links the validity of such an extension to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, we have seen no tangible progress in the implementation of the resolution since its adoption. Indeed, the international community has shown little resolve in persuading Israel, as well as other non-parties to the NPT, to join it as non-nuclear-weapon States. That lack of resolve has become a threat to the very principle of the Treaty's universality.

Among the serious challenges jeopardizing the principles and objectives of the NPT is the danger of seeking to amend the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in order to permit nuclear cooperation with States not party to the NPT. That would fundamentally contradict the letter and spirit of the NPT and the Decision on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which was adopted as part of the package indefinitely extending the NPT. Such a development would forever eliminate the opportunity to destroy nuclear weapons developed outside the NPT regime and the opportunity for NPT non-parties to join it as non-nuclear-weapon States in order to achieve the Treaty's universality. The results would be the loss of the NPT's credibility and usefulness and the collapse of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime, whose cornerstone is the Treaty.

Egypt firmly believes in the principles and objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are of the view that the failure of efforts to make progress in implementing existing international treaties and resolutions must not make it possible to renege on existing commitments or to reinterpret those commitments in a manner that would serve certain political agendas that do not enjoy the support of the international community.

In parallel with our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament through the NPT, we must make States not parties to the NPT firmly understand that it is they who are outside the international consensus and that the so-called new consensus spoken of by some is both unacceptable and invalid — substantively and in reality. Indeed, the international consensus on which the NPT was built still exists, and it has not and will not change, as it is based on the balance between a commitment by recognized NPT nuclear-weapon States to destroy their nuclear arsenals and a commitment by non-nuclear-weapon States to refrain from seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Despite the reluctance of nuclear-weapon States to honour their disarmament commitments under the Treaty, those who develop military nuclear programmes outside the NPT do not have the right to call themselves nuclear-weapon States. Nor does it give them an excuse not to comply with their obligation to disarm. That is an illusion that would put an end to the non-proliferation regime. The issue therefore needs to be firmly and effectively addressed in a multilateral international context, under wise and responsible guidance, in order to address the threat that nuclear weapons pose to humankind. That would allow no room for destructive, power-hungry ambitions or twisted and false principles. The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will provide such a context.

With a view to contributing to the success of the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, scheduled to begin in Geneva at the end of April 2008, the work of the Disarmament Commission should be aimed at the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as a plan of action that enhances the credibility of the Treaty and its review process. Egypt is prepared to make every effort, through the deliberations of the Commission and the second session of the Preparatory Committee, to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the non-proliferation regime, without politicization, selectivity or double standards.

Egypt considers combating and preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons an important objective of the international community, and one that requires States to collectively seek its fulfilment. In that context, we see no better instrument to rely on than the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, agreed in 2001 as a politically binding framework. Egypt has been consistently committed to fully implementing the Programme of Action and has regularly submitted the relevant national reports. We look forward to a collective effort by the international community to reassert the credibility of the Programme of Action through the successful conclusion of the third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in New York in July 2008, where, as representative of the African Group in the Bureau, we will seek a successful outcome, given the importance of this issue to States of the African continent.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your appointment to guide the work of the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I take this opportunity to also extend my greetings to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Carlos Perez of Brazil. We wish them success in their work and promise them our delegation's full cooperation to that end. I would also like to acknowledge the presence among us of Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

I associate myself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group, which included the basic principles of my country's position on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures.

The Argentine Republic believes that there is scope for the revitalization of existing disarmament bodies. In recent years, we have witnessed few results in the tasks that we as Member States have assigned ourselves in addressing challenges to international peace and security. However, those recent experiences must not discourage us from the continuous quest to strengthen multilateralism and, in particular, the United Nations as an efficient tool to deal with those challenges and create a safer world for our citizens.

The recent sessions of the Disarmament Commission have not been exempt from the lack of results seen in other forums. As a universal deliberative body, it reflects the difficulty of steadily breathing new life into political will and translating it into practical recommendations to be implemented at the global, regional and national levels.

This session thus provides us with a unique opportunity to achieve consensus on the two substantive items on our agenda: nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We have a substantive foundation within the two Working Groups upon which to advance in a concrete manner during the current session. Keeping in mind that this is the last year in the three-year cycle, we appeal to delegations to show the political flexibility necessary to successfully conclude the work of the Commission. We believe that we must advance in all areas of debate. But we must also be realistic in view of the complexity of the issues being discussed. That is why we must not allow progress in one area to determine the advances achieved in others. In other words, to restrict our work to parallel developments in all areas would only lead us to failure, something that I am certain we all wish to avoid.

My country, Argentina, is firmly committed to nuclear disarmament. We are convinced on principle, by conviction and because as a producer and consumer of nuclear energy and materials, we believe that we have a special responsibility. Our country has given priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament and has made significant efforts in the field at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels.

Since the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has been a pioneer in the quest for a world free of nuclear weapons. However, regional action, no matter how important and praiseworthy, cannot replace in scope or impact universal action. In that regard, we are all charged with a universal responsibility.

As the representative of a country that is part of a very populous nuclear-weapon-free zone, I reiterate the appeal to all nuclear-weapon States to renew their efforts to fulfil the objectives of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which continues to be the cornerstone of the regime of disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. In addition, and keeping in mind that some Member States of this Commission have not yet joined the Treaty, we urge them to reconsider that decision and join the regime as non-nuclear-weapon States. In particular, I would like to express our profound concern over the lack of implementation of the 13 practical steps recommended in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Unfortunately, those measures, agreed upon eight years ago, continue to be needed today due to their lack of implementation.

Let me stress that a more effective response to the challenges facing us in the field of the proliferation of nuclear weapons would be possible if the nuclear-weapon States were willing to accept the complete elimination of those weapons. The situation is further worsened by the growing readiness to include nuclear weapons in new security doctrines. Contradictory speech cannot be allowed on this issue: we cannot sing the praises of non-proliferation while developing more sophisticated nuclear weapons. The destruction of current arsenals is thus delayed, and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is impeded.

The Argentine Republic is ready to contribute to a common, shared agreement on the immediate need for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We hope that during the current session, all member States will share this fundamental premise and will, with creativity, identify steps to be taken immediately to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons at last.

Allow me to refer briefly to the second substantive item on our agenda, as the representative of a country belonging to one of the regions that has made the most progress in the implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. As in the case of nuclear disarmament, the Latin American and Caribbean region has been a pioneer in the implementation of confidence-building measures. We have witnessed the benefits that they have brought in safeguarding peace and consolidating democracy in the Americas by allowing for greater transparency and dialogue among the countries of the hemisphere.

The goal of the confidence-building measures is to reduce uncertainties and misperceptions regarding the behaviour of States, thus diminishing the risk of military confrontation. With that principle in mind, Argentina has submitted a draft resolution every year since the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly that aims at, inter alia, strengthening the exchange of information on confidence-building measures. Pursuant to these resolutions, which have been adopted by consensus with an average of 100 sponsors, we have created a computerized database that facilitates regular consultations on the progress achieved in designing and implementing measures around the world. We hope Member States will make use of that tool to consolidate a mechanism of additional transparency within the United Nations.

Lastly, we would like to say that, even if there are those who repeatedly seek to discredit the usefulness of the Commission, we believe that, to the contrary, the current international security situation affords us an opportunity to reflect on the need to reaffirm its value. Since reaching agreements on innovative and creative recommendations will not be possible without the necessary political will, we believe that the Commission, thanks to its deliberative nature, provides an appropriate context for an open dialogue that will foster greater understanding of all national positions. It is our duty to continue believing in the existing disarmament bodies as tools for the consolidation of international peace and security and thus to respond to the interests of our citizens.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair this session of the Disarmament Commission. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups, who will work with you. The United Republic of Tanzania associates itself with the statement read out by the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

Tanzania has consistently supported the efforts of the Secretary-General in promoting and enhancing international peace and security and the work of this Commission to support the attainment of those goals. However, it should be noted from the outset that the Commission is commencing its work this time against the background of the deliberations of the First Committee during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, which were marred by apprehension and disagreements regarding allegations that some of the nuclear-weapon States are placing their arsenals on alert. That is a frightening reminder of the cold war era. We need unambiguous assurances from all quarters on this sensitive issue.

This substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will deal with two basic agenda items: recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Tanzania abides by its principled positions on nuclear weapons, as adopted at several summits and ministerial meetings, and is supportive of confidence-building measures at all levels in the field of conventional arms for strengthening international peace and security.

While most nuclear-weapon States are insisting on balanced reductions of their arsenals based on the principle of undiminished security, others are calling for complete nuclear disarmament to avoid new instabilities but at the same time refuse to discuss steps towards disarmament with verification. Tanzania calls for complete and total disarmament. We reaffirm the principle that disarmament and non-proliferations are the main pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and call for the universalization of that regime.

It should equally be noted that the differences among nuclear-weapon States on the one hand and between them and the non-nuclear-weapon States on the other on strengthening the NPT regime need to be resolved through negotiated compromises in the interest of international peace and security.

Tanzania believes that it is unreasonable to expect non-nuclear-weapon States to comply with their obligations while the nuclear-weapon States have failed to fulfil their obligations with transparent enforcement and verification measures. Short of that, the NPT regime will remain shaky. The bottom line should be a world without nuclear weapons, with verifiable disarmament and sharing of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes on a non-discriminatory basis.

Conventional weapons are of the highest concern to the developing world in general and to the Great Lakes region of Africa in particular. Tanzania commends the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the European Union, which have pushed the resolution of problems arising from the accumulation of conventional weapons stockpiles and surplus, conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and an arms trade treaty. Equally, we commend all States that have taken steps towards combating the uncontrolled and illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons, including man-portable air defence systems.

Tanzania supports an arms trade treaty and the global campaign launched under the banner "What people want", based on the analysis by the Secretary-General on feasibility, scope and draft parameters for an arms trade treaty. Tanzania appreciates the view expressed by a number of States that the arms trade treaty must include all conventional weapons and that the range of activities, including transfers, that fall within the scope of the treaty must be defined clearly. We look forward to the establishment of an open-ended working group in 2009 by the General Assembly to negotiate and agree the terms of a global arms trade treaty.

Tanzania supports the growing consensus among States on the implementation and universalization of the Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. That being the case, Tanzania urges Member States to work for penal legislation and strict export controls on biological agents associated with dual-use technology and equipment. Those measures should be accompanied by the revitalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's confidence-building measures by ensuring the annual submission of reports by all States.

Tanzania has always stressed the linkage between disarmament and development in the context of escalating government expenditures on military capability and armaments and the potential use of such resources for development purposes. All statistical evidence shows that both developed and developing States have enormous expenditures on armaments as compared to allocations for socio-economic development. The propensity to spend on arms should be curbed by generating the political will to implement disarmament measures, by putting in place credible confidence-building measures as disarmament proceeds and by cultivating a culture of peace in current and successive generations. The Disarmament Commission should have a high stake in that process, but the challenge has many stakeholders, including political constituencies and civic organizations of civil society in all countries and their international networks.

Mr. Marrakchi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my delegation's warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. I would like to assure you and, through you, the other members of the Bureau, of the full support of my delegation. I am confident that your experience and wisdom will prove to be a significant asset for a productive conclusion to this final session of the Commission's three-year cycle.

I would also like to welcome the participation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, at the opening meeting of this session, and to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Sergio Duarte and, through him, the entire staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for the commendable efforts they have made throughout the year in following up and managing disarmament issues within the United Nations.

While it endorses yesterday's statements by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) and by the representative of Benin on behalf of the African Group, as well as the statement made this morning by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Arab Group, the Moroccan delegation, in its national capacity, would like to focus on a number of issues that are of particular importance for the Kingdom.

It is no secret that currently the United Nations disarmament machinery is characterized by inertia, inflexibility of positions — even, in the case of the Conference on Disarmament, deadlock — and regression on some of the achievements of recent years. In this context, the deliberative nature of the Disarmament Commission's work and the universal nature of its membership constitute both an opportunity to show the relevance of the multilateral disarmament system and a test of the goodwill expressed in statements made during disarmament meetings. From this standpoint the Disarmament Commission remains the ideal multilateral framework for debates, consultation and negotiation with a view to drawing up recommendations capable of revitalizing the disarmament process and strengthening the foundations of international peace and security.

With that in mind, we call for all to show a sense of responsibility and we fully support the Secretary-General's statements and his appeal during his introductory statement at this session on the need for all Member States to show a spirit of compromise in order to reach a productive consensus at the end of the Commission's work that can help the United Nations disarmament machinery to overcome the inertia of the past several years. This will entail the successful conclusion of this session's work and a constructive and productive consensus on the two substantive items on its agenda.

Regarding the first substantive item on the Commission's agenda, Morocco would like to welcome the efforts of the Chairman of Working Group I in drawing up recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. My delegation believes that the Chairman's papers form a good basis for the Commission's discussions; it will spare no effort to contribute to their development, in particular in order to better reflect the central role of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation within the United Nations disarmament system, as emphasized in the paper submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has signed and ratified all multilateral instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), remains committed to general, complete, irreversible, transparent and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We believe that this objective is more than ever of extreme relevance and importance. In this respect, Morocco has consistently worked, including through its membership of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to strengthen international instruments relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular through the earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with strict respect for its three pillars: first, the obligation of nuclear Powers to work for general and complete disarmament; secondly, the need for non-nuclear States to fully respect their non-proliferation commitments; and thirdly, the recognized right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Morocco has always worked for the respect of the principles of international law in the area of disarmament and believes that, while the universal ideal of disarmament requires the strengthening of United Nations legal mechanisms in that area, it is also true that its concrete implementation takes places, above all, at the regional and subregional levels. That is the philosophy that underlies Morocco's consistent support for the principle of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in accordance with the NPT, in particular in Africa and the Middle East.

Morocco reiterates the relevance of the final documents of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, which unfortunately have only partially been implemented. That is the case, in particular, for the 1995 decision on the Middle East and the 13 practical steps adopted in 2000, the fourth of which calls for the immediate establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament and draw up a convention on that issue.

My delegation would also like to express its thanks to the delegation of Benin for its efforts at the head of Working Group II on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. My delegation believes that the document produced by the Chairman of Working Group II is the result of a long process of discussion and refinement and thus constitutes a good basis for the Commission's work. My delegation hopes that the negotiations that will take place in the upcoming days and weeks will make it possible to reach consensus on that document.

Morocco gives particular attention to the question of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We believe that the delicate issue of conventional weapons and, in particular, small arms and light weapons is among the challenges that most threaten and often hinder efforts at reform and development, particularly on the African continent. The absence of regulations and controls on the use, transfer and stockpiling of such weapons contributes to their uncontrolled proliferation in hotbeds of tension, which leads to unsustainable consequences for the stability and security of States, as well as for their socio-economic and human development. Apart from the significant efforts Morocco has made at the national level, which currently give it a great ability to deal with these weapons, we are actively involved in the international community's efforts in that area. Morocco is an active member of the Group of Governmental Experts on ammunition, which ended its second session in New York a week ago.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that with the regrettable failure of the first Small Arms Review Conference, held in 2006, to come to agreement on measures to strengthen the effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action Against the

Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, my delegation places even greater hope in the negotiations at this session of the Disarmament Commission reaching the strongest and broadest consensus possible regarding confidence-building measures on conventional weapons.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that the Disarmament Committee has a double advantage in making a useful contribution in revitalizing the United Nations disarmament machinery by being both genuinely multilateral and a forum for reflection and discussion rather than decision-making. My delegation hopes that over the coming three weeks, we will all rise to the challenges we are facing and agree on concrete recommendations regarding the decisions necessary for the further development of the multilateral disarmament regime.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for my delegation to congratulate you, Ambassador de Klerk, on your election to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups on their election. We are confident, Sir, that thanks to your rich experience and qualities as a diplomat and the cooperation of member States, this session will yield fruitful results on the two substantive items on the agenda of the cycle that is now ending. I would also like to laud the efforts made in the disarmament field by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, since he took up his position in 2007. I assure him of my delegation's support and cooperation in the success of his efforts.

The delegation of Nicaragua would like to fully associate itself with the statements made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is concerned over the lack of progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation — the lack of progress by nuclear-weapon States in the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Nicaragua feels that disarmament can be achieved only in a climate of trust, based on mutual respect and tending towards the establishment of better relations based on justice, solidarity and cooperation, and also believes that multilateral, regional and subregional arms control and disarmament agreements make a decisive contribution to achieving a peaceful world free of weapons of mass destruction.

My Government holds the firm conviction that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, handed down on 8 July 1996, continues to be of immense import as long as we have not achieved complete nuclear disarmament. It clearly provides that States are legally obligated to pursue negotiations in good faith aimed at nuclear disarmament in all its aspects and to bring them to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Despite its imperfections, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has played a crucial role in preventing the propagation of nuclear weapons, promoting cooperation for peaceful uses and in advancing towards complete nuclear disarmament. Here, it is necessary for nuclear-weapon States to fulfil the 13 practical steps agreed upon in 2000, aiming at systematic and progressive implementation of article VI of the NPT.

States parties must comprehensively fulfil the terms of the Treaty and not attempt to reinterpret it or implement it selectively. Thus, there must be respect for the inalienable right of all parties to the Treaty to carry out research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination and in compliance with articles I, II and IV of the Treaty.

As a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Nicaragua reaffirms the appeal made by all the States parties for nuclear-weapon States to withdraw the interpretative statements they made when they joined the Protocols of the Treaty. We also reiterate our solidarity with other nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the creation or expansion of those existing in other parts of the planet. We also support the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which would be a significant contribution to the cause of the reduction of nuclear weapons and would prevent their further development.

My delegation is dismayed at the continued manufacture, transfer and circulation on a large scale and illegally of small arms and light weapons and their accumulation in many parts of the world. Small arms and light weapons have characteristics that allow them to be used in actions undertaken by international terrorists, gangs, organized crime and drug traffickers.

The main victims are always innocent civilians. In this sense, it is important for all States, especially those that produce small arms and light weapons, to ensure that they be supplied exclusively to Governments or Government-authorized State entities.

Nicaragua believes that it is of immense importance to have international, regional and bilateral cooperation for the comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Nicaragua has thus participated actively at the subregional level in efforts made within the Central American Security Commission for the exchange of information or approval of the specific plan in the fight against the illicit trade in weapons, ammunition, explosives and other related articles, which are being implemented by the police forces of the countries of Central America.

Nicaragua introduced the Central American initiative known as the Programme for Arms Limitation and Control for Reaching a Reasonable Balance of Forces and Promoting Stability, Mutual Confidence and Transparency in Central America, which has been in force since 2003. Its goal is to establish a reasonable balance in the defence and security forces, to set the maximum levels for weapons, to institute modern defence and regional public security policies, and to strengthen the mechanisms for peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Central American Project against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, approved at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Central American Security Commission, held in Panama on 6 June 2003, on an initiative of Nicaragua, is an intergovernmental effort aimed at strengthening the control of the trade in small arms and light weapons at the regional level. Its main objective is the elimination of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as to regulate and control the use of legal weapons in civilian hands in Central America in order to help lower the rates of crime and violence in the region. The project recently adopted its programme of work for 2008 and has the support of the United Nations Development Programme through the Central American Small Arms Control Project.

In the inter-American sphere, Nicaragua has also ratified a number of legal instruments, such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, the 1992 Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

In the area of international security, we have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and two of its Protocols. We have also enhanced national legislation in the area of control and registering of weapons through the entry into force of our special law on the control and regulation of firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials and of its regulations. The National Multidisciplinary Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons was formally established on 26 February 2008 pursuant to article 150 of the weapons law which created a technical secretariat and its support group. We also approved the preparation of the Commission's operational plan.

Nicaragua supports the Declaration of the Oslo Conference on Cluster Munitions that acknowledges the severe consequences entailed in the use of cluster bombs and the need for immediate action, and that agreed to conclude by 2008 negotiations on an international instrument that prohibits such weapons for the future. My Government has participated actively in that process.

In 2004, as proof of its commitment to disarmament at the subregional level, Nicaragua unilaterally destroyed 1,000 portable missiles, as part of our determination to encourage concrete action in Central America to achieve a reasonable balance of forces among the States of the region.

As proof of goodwill and within its policy of arms reduction, my Government has begun talks with the Government of the United States of America to negotiate the destruction of 600 man-portable air defence systems in exchange for much-needed medicines and high-tech medical equipment for the country's hospitals.

Last month, President Daniel Ortega met with a medical mission from the United States headed by Mr. John Feeley, Director of the Office of Central American Affairs within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of the United States Department of

State, who also visited a number of hospitals to assess their needs.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that the main responsibility of States is to provide their peoples with sustainable development with equal distribution of wealth, thereby meeting their needs in areas including health, nutrition, education, work and adequate housing. The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua has made a commitment to disarmament, enabling us to reorient resources towards activities that can foster development in order to meet those needs.

Miss Majali (Jordan): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, as well as the other Bureau members on being elected and taking charge of this 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. My delegation is confident that, with your skill and experience, you will do your utmost to ensure a successful outcome of this important session. I also congratulate the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

I would also like to commend Ambassador Rosseli of Uruguay, Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at the 2007 session, for his efforts during the deliberations that took place last year.

My delegation subscribes to the statement presented by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission is the third and final session in our three-year cycle of meetings. That gives our meeting special importance and requires member States to exercise the highest possible flexibility and political will to conclude with a successful outcome. The Secretary-General, who addressed the Commission yesterday, reminded us of that important fact and of the need to work together to reinvigorate our collective efforts to reach our shared goals in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, given their importance to peace and security.

At the 2006 session of the Commission, we succeeded in resuming our work after we were able to agree on its themes for discussion. Against the backdrop of the Commission's inability to reach consensus on specific guidelines or proposals in its previous sessions and the unsuccessful outcomes of important disarmament conferences and meetings, the mere fact that we were able to agree on the agenda items was a step forward.

Today, as we begin our final cycle, what we must keep in mind is that, just as we were able to agree on the two agenda items, it is also possible to reach a consensus on substantive recommendations both for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and for practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

My delegation reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. It has succeeded in previous years in submitting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly on how to approach specific disarmament issues, thus contributing towards the emergence of global disarmament norms.

In working to address the first substantive agenda item, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", my delegation believes that the best way for our Working Group to advance and have a successful outcome would be to remain focused and consistent in our examination of one single text that would be negotiated as we go along in the process, since presenting a number of texts may only stall our efforts. Moreover, my delegation believes that the following issues, among others, should be kept in mind as we work on drafting our recommendations.

The vision and principles contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly remain valid and relevant. They are neither subject to renegotiation nor in question; no more are the commitments to the aims and principles of the United Nations Charter and to the established norms of international law. All the aforementioned are stone foundations for all our future proceedings, on which any progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can be built. We may wish to add to them to address the current security and implementation challenges. The fact, remains, however that member States should fulfil all their obligations in accordance with the arms control and the international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which rests on three pillars, remains the key instrument in our efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. What is needed to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the balanced and non-selective implementation of the NPT and all its provisions.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. Nuclear-weapon States are urged to implement their unequivocal undertaking to bring about the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

Commitment to and full implementation by all States parties to the package agreed to at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference — which comprises the three decisions and the resolution on the Middle East, as well as the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in particular with regard to the 13 practical steps — are also necessary.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones remain pivotal for maintaining the international non-proliferation regime and for consolidating international peace and security. While those that have been established in various parts of the world are welcome as positive steps towards attaining the desired objective of nuclear disarmament, efforts to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions of the world where they do not exist are urged. Here, the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as called for in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, is of the utmost importance.

Israel is the only State in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT, thereby preserving its nuclear option. Its accession to the NPT and its implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency safety measures in all of its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities would therefore contribute to regional peace and security, enhance confidence-building measures between all parties and decrease the potential for nuclear accidents and the risk of radiological contamination, as well as possible nuclear proliferation in the region.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is yet to enter into force. States that have not ratified or acceded to the CTBT, especially those mentioned in annex II of the Treaty, whose ratification is necessary for it to enter into force, are urged to do so.

The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva must be overcome to allow for negotiations on a convention banning the production of fissile material, as well as a convention on nuclear weapons.

With respect to the deliberations in Working Group II on the agenda item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, my delegation urges all States to focus on the remaining issues for resolution. In that regard, my delegation would like to point out that the following issues should be taken into consideration in the outcome of the Working Group's efforts.

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms may strengthen international peace and security, but they are neither a substitute nor a precondition for disarmament measures. They are additional measures that can be undertaken to help to create an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament. As such, unilateral, regional and international confidence-building measures are supported.

Confidence-building measures must respond to the needs, realities and particularities of the State or region pursuing them. The implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures by all States is of special significance, taking into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region.

Transparency in the area of conventional weapons cannot be ensured in the absence of an approach that encompasses all types of weapons in all their aspects. It must stem from a balanced treatment of the various elements of armaments and take into account such inseparable aspects as national capacities for the production, procurement and stockpiling of weapons.

Turning the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms into a more effective component of the regime as a credible confidence-building and early warning system mechanism is an extremely important goal of our deliberations. That could be done by broadening its scope to include all types of weapons on a non-selective basis and in line with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. That would further respond to the security needs of many other States and help forge consensus on that important issue.

Finally, my delegation would like once again to assure you, Sir, of all its possible support and cooperation as it works with you, as well as the Chairmen of the Working Groups and members of the Commission, to try to bring about a successful outcome of this session's work.

The Chairman: That brings us to the end of the list of speakers under the general exchange of views.

I call on the representative of Iran to speak in exercise of his right of reply.

Mr. Robatjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to address Slovenia's inaccurate and misleading statement, made on behalf of the European Union (EU), regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

Iran's nuclear programme has been, is and will remain totally peaceful. The reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the most recent one, bear witness to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities. The EU presidency, in its statement, failed to pay attention to the factual information provided by the IAEA that

> "[T]he Agency has been able to continue to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. Iran has provided the Agency with access to declared nuclear material and has provided the required nuclear material accountancy reports".

The Iranian nation is committed to its obligations and, at the same time, persistent in pursuing and exercising its legal and inalienable rights. The recent IAEA reports clearly indicate that Iran's cooperation with the Agency has been far beyond its treaty obligations and has been proactive. As a result of Iran's proactive cooperation, the workplan has been fully implemented and all outstanding issues have been resolved and closed.

The unjustified and unwarranted focus on peaceful safeguarded nuclear facilities, rather than addressing the existing proliferation threat posed by the unsafeguarded secret nuclear weapons installations of the Zionist regime, is counterproductive and constitutes a dangerous distraction. If the EU continues to turn a blind eye to the Israeli proliferation threat, it will lose its credibility throughout the Middle East region. In that context, we urge the EU to avoid inconsistency of approach to the non-proliferation regime.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Lee Do-hoon (Republic of Korea): Let me be fairly brief because, first, we are near the end of today's meeting and, secondly, because almost everyone in this room is well aware of my country's reputation in the international community.

The Republic of Korea would like to address the claim made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning the Republic of Korea's so-called nuclear war rehearsal and pre-emptive strike against a nuclear base of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation would like to make it unmistakably clear that that claim is groundless and inconsistent with the facts of the situation. The Republic of Korea would also like to reiterate the message that we previously sent to the North, which is as follows:

> "Our side has sincerely upheld the non-aggression agreement between the South and the North and this position will not change in the future … The South is always ready to discuss peace and easing tensions on the Korean peninsula."

Let me again refer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's remarks about confidence-building measures. My new Government has announced the "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000" scheme, which is our plan to cooperate with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so it can achieve an average per capita income of $3,000 within 10 years if it demonstrates its will to renounce its nuclear capability and open up its society. That is a policy manifestation of our country and represents our hope to reduce tensions through inter-Korean dialogue and resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.

We hope to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through a full declaration by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear programme, pursuant to the agreements made in February and October 2007, thereby fully implementing the Joint Statement of September 2005.

The Chairman: I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): As a matter of fact, I do not want to be seen having a quarrel with my fellow countryman, the representative of South Korea. What I have stated here at this session reflects the reality on the Korean peninsula.

First, he said that my statement with regard to the nuclear war rehearsal against my country, conducted by the United States and South Korea, is false, but I say here that it is true. As I stated earlier, in March South Korea and the United States conducted a large military exercise similar in character and scale to nuclear war. Why do they need such kinds of military exercises when a positive atmosphere is prevailing on the Korean peninsula that is conducive to the resolution of the nuclear issue?

As I have said before, the nuclear issue has been generated only by the hostile policy of the United States against my country. The nuclear war exercise is a clear indication that the United States has not yet renounced its policy against my country. Furthermore, South Korea — the same nation as mine — joined that military exercise against my country.

Secondly, the South Korean representative referred to confidence-building measures. What kind of confidence-building measures are needed on the Korean peninsula? I clearly stated in my statement that North and South Korea have the 15 June Joint Declaration and the 4 October declaration, adopted at the summit-level meeting. I think that all the detailed measures clearly indicated in those two declarations are enough, and represent more than confidence-building measures.

The representative of the Republic of Korea talked, again, about the so-called "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000", which means that if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were to open its doors, South Korea would help North Korea to raise its average per capita income to $3,000. That is quite preposterous. It seems that South Korea is quite generous. That is conditional on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's abandonment of nuclear weapons.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula will be possible only when the United States gives up its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is why the bilateral negotiations are taking place. Even today, there was a meeting between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States in Singapore with regard to narrowing their differences and to nuclear declaration. We have already formulated reports on nuclear declaration and have informed the United States. There may be some differences of opinion; that is why there is a need to talk. As long as the threat of the United States and South Korea remains, the nuclear issue will not be resolved.

With regard to the South Korean representative's claim regarding the so-called $3,000, it is quite ridiculous for South Korea to pretend to show generosity, finding fault with the self-supporting national economy of our country and the living conditions of its people, when South Korea has a colonial economy dependent on the United States of America. I would like to tell the South Korean representative that his country should just concern itself with taking care of its own people.

In conclusion, I urge South Korea to gain a correct understanding of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, to look fairly at the reality prevailing on the Korean peninsula and to refrain from giving false information at this session.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of the Republic of Korea, who wishes to make a second statement in exercise of the right of reply, which is limited to a maximum of five minutes.

Mr. Lee Do-hoon (Republic of Korea): I will be very brief. I just want to make clear that our intention is genuine and sincere concerning confidence-building measures and the implementation of the agreements that we have already entered into with our North Korean brothers. All that we want is implementation in kind on the other side.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hong Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am sorry to take the floor again, but the South Korean representative has compelled me to do so. In view of our time constraints, I too would like to be very brief.

If South Korea is sincere in its attitude with regard to confidence-building measures, I kindly request that my South Korean colleague urge his Government to renounce its confrontational approach. Things have changed overnight with the new Government in South Korea. We have very good relations with the South Korean Mission, which was involved in formulating the draft General Assembly resolution supporting and welcoming the 4 October 2007 Declaration. Now we are quarrelling again. It is of no use for us to quarrel with each other as parts of the same nation.

The Chairman: That brings us to the end of the first phase of our work, namely, the general exchange of views. It was interesting, intellectually challenging and businesslike. We heard approximately 40 speakers, who presented a comprehensive picture of global disarmament efforts — achievements as well as shortcomings. Responding to the changing international security environment, those statements contained new ideas, specific elements and concrete proposals, which, I am sure, will enrich the discussions within the Working Groups — the next phase of our work. I want to encourage delegations once again to look critically at the statements delivered and to make sure that nothing positive and innovative contained in them is lost.

Tomorrow, both Working Groups are starting their discussions, which, I hope, will be successful. I wish all delegations and both Chairmen good luck in their valiant efforts. Needless to say, I and the other members of the Bureau remain at their disposal.

I also want to briefly revisit what I said about the possible future participation of experts in the deliberations of the Commission. Obviously, that idea touched a chord in delegations, as I have already been approached by a number of them, who have asked me to pursue consultations with the membership of the Commission regarding format, time and other aspects of experts' participation. I intend to do precisely that during the next three weeks. But here, I want to reiterate my plea to delegations to actively engage the Bureau and to bring us their views and ideas so that we can present a workable blueprint for the implementation of a new approach as early as next year.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like once again to remind delegations that the deadline for submitting names for the list of participants is tomorrow, 9 April, at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.288

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

288th meeting
Thursday, 24 April 2008, 10.30 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Klerk .... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

The Chairman: The Disarmament Commission is meeting as a Committee of the Whole. After three weeks of deliberations on the substantive agenda items by the two Working Groups, the Commission is now approaching the final stage of its work for the current session, that is, consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies and of its draft report to the General Assembly. As planned and scheduled in the programme of work, this meeting of the Committee of the Whole will be devoted to general consideration of the reports of the Working Groups, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2008/CRP.3 and CRP.4, and of the draft report of the Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2008/CRP.2. All three documents have been distributed. I also intend to invite the Commission to discuss the issue of the participation of experts in the work of the Commission's plenary meetings — a matter to which I referred several times during our general debate.

First, we shall take up the reports of the Working Groups, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2008/CRP.3 and CRP.4. We shall consider them individually, seeking general comments. Later, at the 289th plenary meeting — which will follow this afternoon or, if time permits, later this morning — the reports will be formally introduced by the Chairmen of the respective Working Groups.

The Committee will now take up the reports of the Working Groups. We will begin with document CRP.3, the draft report of Working Group I on agenda item 4, which was dealt with earlier this morning in the Working Group. Are there any comments regarding document CRP 3? I see none. Are there any comments regarding document CRP.4, which is the draft report of Working Group II on agenda item 5? I see none.

Before I move on to the consideration of document CRP.2, containing the draft report of the Commission, I should like to turn to a pending matter of business that has a direct bearing on the text of the report: the issue of the possible participation of experts in the plenary meetings of the Disarmament Commission.

As I said, I spoke about this subject at the beginning of this session, at the first and fourth plenary meetings. It was agreed that, with the assistance of the Bureau, I would carry out consultations and would submit the results of those efforts for the consideration of members before the end of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission.

Let me briefly recapture the gist of the issue. Subparagraph (e) of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 61/98, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission", adopted on 6 December 2006, encouraged the Commission to invite, as appropriate, experts on disarmament for discussions at its plenary meetings. In pursuit of that recommendation, I conducted consultations and, through the Bureau, circulated an informal non-paper containing elements of an organizational and procedural nature for the implementation of the recommendations set out in the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

aforementioned resolution. That paper is before members, having been distributed this morning.

I hope that delegations have had sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the general thrust of my proposal. Nevertheless, it would seem wise to me to suspend the meeting for 10 minutes to give delegations time to reread the informal non-paper. Then, after resuming the meeting, I intend to ask delegations to take a decision on this matter if possible.

But before doing so, I want to draw the Commission's attention to paragraphs 10, 11 and 18 of the Commission's report, which appear in boldface in document CRP.2. Those paragraphs basically summarize the consideration of the issue at the present session and contain necessary recommendations for further steps. Thus, those paragraphs are to be considered in the context of the decision that the Commission will take on this issue.

Are there any questions before I suspend the meeting for 10 minutes?

Mr. Semin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have documents A/CN.10/2008/CRP.3 and CRP.4, as well as the paper concerning the participation of experts. I do not see document CRP.2 before me; perhaps it did not reach us.

The Chairman: Any documents that have not been distributed can be obtained from the booth on my left.

Are there other questions? There being none, I shall now suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.35 and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

The Chairman: We have before us the Chairman's non-paper on the participation of experts in the work of the Disarmament Commission. May I ask whether there are any comments?

Mr. Bashir (Pakistan): We wish to express our deepest appreciation to the Chairman and the Chairs of the two Working Groups and all the members of the Bureau for their very consistent and productive hard work.

Regarding the issue at hand, I believe that there was some informal discussion in another setting, but the issue then was the participation of non-governmental organizations at these meetings. Now, without having to go into the details of what was discussed previously, I think it is difficult to dispute the logic of the proposal. Obviously, inputs that we get can only enhance our understanding of the issues. However, when we talk about a principle like blanket approval or consensus, there is a question as to whether we should invite non-governmental set-ups to our meetings, because research institutes and think tanks by definition are not supposed to be owned or operated or funded by particular Governments. So some questions are bound to arise, because this process is an intergovernmental process. How much value is it going to add?

There is also a question of whether, when these experts are invited to the meetings, we will get presentations on various issues or not. But I wish to draw the delegates' attention to the input of an expert. Are we talking about a deficiency in our comprehension of issues? I think that that may not be the problem. None of us here is any stranger to the harmful effects of nuclear weapons, or the fact that there is no disarmament or non-proliferation; the problems are there.

Basically, there is a problem of the irreconcilability of certain positions, or the difficulty in reconciling those positions, which requires greater political will — for example, decisions made at the summit level and maybe not in this particular setting. Although the idea per se is good, we do need to draw up some criteria for inviting outside experts. Perhaps, rather than taking a decision now and then having to question or rescind it later, it may be beneficial to debate the issue at length in the upcoming session of the First Committee.

Mr. Heinze (Germany): I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman and the Chairs of the Working Groups, once again, in the name of my delegation, for all the hard work they have done.

As far as the participation of experts in the work of the Disarmament Commission is concerned, we had a discussion on the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts in the Commission's Bureau last year, and I recall that there was not very much support for including either NGOs or experts. I think the first argument was that it is still unclear what the topics to be discussed in the Commission's next session will be, and we have to be clear about that before we discuss the question.

The second argument was that we have time constraints. We are a deliberative body, and we were very deliberative this time, so the time that was at our disposal for deliberations was hardly sufficient. It is difficult to conceive where experts would fit in. Further, as the previous speaker mentioned, do we really need additional inputs? Are there things that are not known to us? I am sure there are, but is additional input relevant for our work here?

So to sum up, the feeling in the Bureau last year is still the feeling of my delegation. I do not see a lot of added value in having either NGOs or experts participate in the work of the Disarmament Commission. The only possibility that I can see is that we have something *dans les couloirs*, as occurs during the First Committee all the time. But here in the room — I am very sceptical whether we should include them.

Ms. Ragsdale (United States of America): I would just like to weigh in for a second to endorse the remarks made by my colleague from Germany, particularly in his reference to the lack of clarity on the topics that the experts would approach in such a session. I am also concerned about the cost — we don't have clarity on that either, which would be taken up by another committee in the United Nations — and lack of clarity on just how many we are speaking of. So I am also in favour of perhaps deferring consideration of this.

Mr. Rao (India): First, let me take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Chairs of the two Working Groups for the work they have done. Like other delegations that have spoken before me, I see merit in the argument that, in order to decide about focused contributions by outside experts, it would be necessary to know the topics and the expertise. It might be in the best interest that we defer it to a later date, once we know the topics and the criteria and are convinced that we need those inputs to enrich our discussions and deliberations in the Commission.

Mr. Rodríguez Zahar (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation also agrees with the arguments set out by our colleagues from Pakistan and Germany. In essence, this is a deliberative body made up of States, of Governments, and I believe that is its principal value. Furthermore, due to our experience in both Working Group I and II in the cycle that is concluding now, perhaps the only thing we could consider is whether the Chairmen at the Commission's next cycles — depending on what those cycles deal with — if they are going to present Chairman's papers, could use the advice of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) or any of the bodies mentioned here. However, there are many ways of doing that; you do not have to bring the experts here. There are many people from these agencies and organizations here at the United Nations, and the only added value, I would say, would perhaps be an informal exercise on the part of the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II in using the advice of this type of expert.

Mr. Semin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your very qualified team from the Netherlands here in New York and in Geneva, which has shown work of very high quality at this session. We would like to note the following regarding the experts.

It seems to us we always choose an easy path of asking for money from the budget of the Organization and to think up something additional to spend this money on. We forget that there are good forums that have been working for a long time. Non-governmental experts always participate in the work of the First Committee, for example, particularly in an informal setting. During the lunch break they have seminars on things that are of interest, and there is no need for money from the regular budget for this. Moreover, if we need to use the potential of UNIDIR, then we probably have the opportunity to request some work from it or the preparation of a report that is timed to the consideration of specific items on the agenda of the Commission.

Finally, we have governmental experts who participate in the work of various forums, such as those concerning the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and various other conventions. We can always use governmental experts with the delegation that brought them bearing the expense.

In short, there are various ways to use governmental and non-governmental experts without adding to the expenditure from the United Nations budget. We must consider this. It is an important question, and certainly we need to resolve it not with an easy solution but a wise one.

The Chairman: Maybe it is time for me to make a few points in reaction to the different remarks made. As your Chairman, I am under the guidance of the resolution that I mentioned, adopted by consensus one and a half years ago — General Assembly resolution 61/98 — whose relevant paragraph says that the Commission is encouraged to invite, as appropriate, experts on disarmament, including those at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, for discussions at its plenary meetings.

That resolution was adopted and, as your Chairman I am under the obligation to see whether we can take a decision on that point. I note a lukewarm reception to my proposal, which is different to the resolution that was adopted earlier. However, a number of very valuable points have been made, and let me say a few words about those.

It is, indeed, true that the Disarmament Commission is a deliberative body. It is true that we have used our time this year wisely, but at the same time, I noted that we did not use all the time we had in the plenary meetings. In that sense, I thought that my first option would be to use one of the four slots for our plenary debate for experts. It would not cost us time in a sense, because this year we wasted that time. So we could productively open up to experts in a modest way.

Secondly, the point is not so much about opening up, but how to bridge irreconcilable differences, an argument made by our colleague from Pakistan. It is true that outsiders cannot resolve our differences, but maybe they can show our differences in a different light. From time to time, I am surprised by arguments of experts that I had not thought about, and I am ready to be surprised and to be informed by the wisdom of experts. We assume that the Chair at the time, together with secretariat, would make wise choices as to whom to invite.

Another argument was made: that we do not know what topics will be on our agenda in future years, which is true. We are not here to make choices about specific experts, specific persons or specific institutes. We are here to debate a principle — whether the Disarmament Commission, in a very limited way, wants to open up in future years, as the General Assembly recommended. I have not heard arguments that we cannot take a decision in principle, leaving the specific choices of experts to later.

Regarding the procedures of the First Committee, it is its Chairman, together with the secretariat and in consultation with the membership, who makes choices about specific persons participating in the debate. I still envisage a similar procedure in future meetings of the Disarmament Commission.

One last point about costs: it is true that this might cost us a few thousand dollars, but one should weigh that. It is only a small percentage of the cost of this Commission meeting, so I think it would be a very limited difference. Indeed, delegations would have to weigh the extra cost against the advantages of opening up our debates, which must represent a certain added value for the deliberations of the Commission.

Do any delegations wish to make comments?

Mr. Cahalane (Ireland): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for bringing this paper to our attention. I also join others in thanking you and your team and the Chairs of the two Working Groups for the work done over the past three weeks.

Just to support what you are saying, I think that this is a consensus resolution that was adopted in the First Committee. And it seems to me that, given the inability of the Disarmament Commission to fulfil its mandate as a deliberative body, having the participation of experts from different areas might indeed be an appropriate use of time, since, as you said, we did not use all the time set aside for plenary discussions this year. But I do not think my delegation is naïve enough to believe that experts could bring about a great sea change in the deliberations of this body. Nonetheless, this seems to be an improvement to our working methods that might be worth exploring.

The Chairman: Are there other comments? I see no further requests from the floor.

I propose to take into account the various comments made — which go in different directions — and to split the difference. In other words, I propose that we retain in our report the discussion that we have had on the matter, and, in order to support that discussion, that we annex the Chairman's non-paper and not take a decision. In practical terms, that would mean retaining paragraphs 10 and 11 of our report, perhaps with a slight change, and deleting paragraph 18, which sets out the decision that we might have taken. Perhaps members could consider that question for a minute. We will, of course, go very carefully through the report as contained in Conference Room Paper 2. But my question at this point is whether the gist of my proposal is acceptable to delegations.

Would any delegation like to take the floor?

Mr. Rodríguez Zahar (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation notes that we have already seen that there was no consensus on the Chairman's documents in Working Groups I and II, and therefore they were not annexed. Nor is there a consensus on your proposal, Mr. Chairman, in this case. If we are going to be fair to the Chairmen of the Working Groups I and II, I believe that, for the sake of consistency and coherence, we should not agree to the annexation of your document.

Mr. Semin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation, Mr. Chairman, sees a gap in logic between paragraphs 10 and 11, in which you present the document for consideration, and the complete deletion of the decision on that question, which you proposed in paragraph 18. We could suggest, as a compromise, that paragraph 18, which you proposed deleting, read as follows:

> "At the same meeting, the Commission decided to continue its consideration of procedural and organizational elements for the possible participation of experts in the work of the Commission".

The Chairman: The gist of that proposed amendment is that we say only that the Disarmament Commission will continue its discussion of the participation of experts in the future. Is that a proposal that would find a consensus? I see no further comments.

For clarity's sake, paragraph 18 would then read as follows:

> "At the same meeting, the Commission took note of the Chairman's non-paper on procedural and organizational elements for possible participation of experts in the work of the Commission and decided to continue the consideration of the issue in the future".

Shall I take it, then, that the Committee decides to reformulate the paragraph in the report? We are not yet adopting the report.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: That brings us to the text of CRP.2 as a whole. It will be formally introduced later, but at this stage, with the change in paragraph 18, are there any comments on the report? I see none.

As I mentioned earlier, having considered the reports of the Working Groups and the draft report of the Commission at this meeting of the Committee of the Whole, those reports will be considered and formally adopted at the forthcoming plenary meeting.

If there are no comments, are there any requests for the floor?

Mr. Rao (India): Just for clarification, with regard to annex II of the draft report, in view of the discussions that we have just had and the decision we have taken with regard to paragraph 18, would annex II be included?

The Chairman: I thank the representative of India for that point, because it is important to clarify one or two things with regard to the bracketed text in the report. So for the clarity of all delegations, let me say that, with regard to the references to annexes I and II, which are bracketed on the front page of the report, both will disappear, because we have no annexes. So one should delete that bracketed text. The word "Annexes" disappears, as does the text below that word. Also, paragraphs 10 and 11 were in brackets. We can retain those paragraphs, so we will remove the brackets there. Paragraph 18 was also bracketed, and we have re-worded it, as suggested by the representative of the Russian Federation.

I once again thank the representative of India for making it possible for me to make that clarification.

Are there any other comments or requests for the floor? If not, then we have concluded the consideration of the reports of the Working Groups and the draft report of the Commission, and that brings us to the end of this meeting of the Committee of the Whole. I would propose that, in light of the time — it is nearly 11.30 — we suspend for a few minutes. Then, instead of continuing this afternoon with our plenary meeting, if delegations would be amenable to continuing after a short break with the plenary meeting, then I am convinced that we can finish our business this morning. That might suit some delegations in particular. Is that agreeable? Then the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.30 a.m.